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STREET SCENE IN LINGAH, A PORT ON THE PERSIAN GULF.

The dress of the women here is in some ways more like that of the Arabs than the Persians. This woman is wearing a short veil of dark net, and carrying native made straw baskets on her head.

Date palms are found only in the south of Persia.



# PERSIAN WOMEN & THEIR WAYS

THE EXPERIENCES & IMPRESSIONS OF A LONG  
SOJOURN AMONGST THE WOMEN OF THE  
LAND OF THE SHAH WITH AN INTIMATE  
DESCRIPTION OF THEIR CHARACTER-  
ISTICS, CUSTOMS & MANNER  
OF LIVING

BY  
C. COLLIVER RICE

WITH MANY ILLUSTRATIONS & A SKETCH MAP

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C. COLLIVER RICE.

HERTFORD HEATH.



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# THE LIFE OF PERSIAN WOMEN

## CHAPTER I

### BACKGROUND

TO many people Persia merely suggests cats and carpets, poetry, philosophy and fairy tales. And truly it is still more the land of *The Arabian Nights* than a land that is sharing in the rough and tumble of the present day.

If it were possible to be transported on a magic carpet, or by the aid of Aladdin's lamp, instead of having to undertake the long and uncertain and difficult journey, the land of the Shah would be a popular resort. It offers its brilliant blue sky, wonderful atmosphere, glorious sunshine, everlasting hills and rolling plains, snow-capped mountains and rocky defiles, gardens and orchards, society or solitude. It fascinates with its ruined palaces like those of Cyrus, Darius and Xerxes at Pasargadæ and Persepolis; its medley of races and religions; its great cities which have risen and fallen and are now but shadows of their former selves. Its past glory and traditions mean more than its present state of backwardness and stagnation, and surely a country with a past so well worth remembering is worthy of a chance of again taking an honourable place among the nations of the Middle East. It is inconceivable that all that was good and great in ancient Persia has perished.

## Background

A backward glance will help the understanding of present-day conditions.

Before the dawn of history Central Asia was peopled with hardy tribesmen, descendants of Japhet, who, in contrasting themselves with others, called themselves Arya, or noble. Looking back, we see that these people were the Aryans, the ancestors of the Indo-European family, and consequently of the leading races of the world. Max Müller wrote :

“There was a time when the ancestors of the Celts, the Germans, the Slavonians, the Greeks and Italians, the Persians and Hindus were living together beneath the same roof, separate from the ancestors of the Semitic and Turanian races. . . . In continuous struggle with each other, and with Semitic and Turanian races, these Aryans have become the rulers of history.”

About 2000 B.C. many of these moved to the north-west, entering, and gradually spreading over, Europe. Others pushed south and became the dominant race of Northern India, and the remainder, after centuries of unrest, were, about 550 B.C., forcibly united to form the Persian Empire. The days of Persia's greatness immediately followed, when, for a time, she was the most powerful empire that the world had then known. The rule of this new empire was vested in Cyrus the Great and Darius the Mede. During this reign Media, Lydia, and Babylon with captive Judah, all came under Persian rule. Josephus records that the ten tribes were “transplanted” into India and Persia, other nations of the Assyrian empire taking their place in Palestine. According to 2 Esdras xiii., they left Persia later on and went to “a further country.”

Cambyes, the son of Cyrus, conquered Egypt in 525 B.C., and Darius Hystaspes extended the bounds of Persia to

## Background

India. His great ambition, however, as also that of his successor Xerxes, was to get power in Europe, but at Marathon, and later on at Mycale and Platæa, the destinies of the world were changed. Persians, from being hardy mountaineers, had become the rulers and soldiers of the Orient, enjoying all the luxury that the civilization of the day could give. They were liberal masters, neither cruel nor capricious, but ease and prosperity, unaccompanied by moral and intellectual advancement, led to disaster. The empire which had been reared by force was destined to fall by the same means. The Greeks repaid Persia for the indignities she had heaped on them, and Alexander the Great met and defeated her forces on the plains of Arbela in 331 B.C. The desire was not to obliterate Persia, but to graft it with Grecian life and thought. Alexander's death in 323 B.C. left this unaccomplished.

Seleucus, one of his generals, succeeded him, and was the first of the twenty-two kings of the Seleucidæ: this dynasty was followed by that of the Parthians.

In A.D. 226 the Persians proper arose again, and, during the four centuries of the rule of the Sassanian dynasty, Persia once more enjoyed prosperity and influence, though she was no longer a world power.

Ultimately, in A.D. 640, Persia yielded to the great conquering force of the Muhammadan invaders. Nöldeke says: "Hellenism never touched more than the surface of Persian life, but Irān was penetrated to the core by Arabian religion and Arabian ways."

The subsequent history shows how from the seventh century A.D. the character of the people was changed; and, with the single exception of the brilliant period under the Sufi dynasty, especially during the reign of Shah Abbas the Great, 1585-1628, Persia has gone by

## Background

a downward road. Progress has been almost unknown; and, as a nation, Persia has counted for less and less in the history of the world.

Darius Hystaspes reigned over an empire of two and a half million square miles; now the extent is less than three-quarters of a million. Still it is a vast country when you come to traverse it at the rate of twenty-five miles a day. Many of the races which Persia governed have disappeared from the map, but after 2500 years she still has an independent existence.

The original Aryans were Animists and worshippers of nature. During the period, probably, from 1000 to 500 B.C. their descendants were gradually won over to the faith of Zoroaster, which faith it was claimed had been miraculously delivered to him, and which finally held Persia in its grip for many centuries. In the course of time some of the old beliefs were revived and to some extent absorbed in Zoroastrianism.

Persia was one of the first lands in which Christianity was preached. Armenia was the first country to adopt Christianity as its national faith, and very soon after came under Persian rule. Almost simultaneously with the preaching of the gospel in Persia, the belief arose in Mithras, the God of Light. The two faiths were antagonistic. Mithraism was mythical, and excluded women from all its privileges.

Another form of belief which prevailed was Manichæism, which combined the tenets of Christianity with those of Zoroastrianism, and attracted those followers of Mithras who were willing to compromise. Both Mithraism and Manichæism fell, and the faiths of Christ and Zoroaster divided the land.

To-day Christianity is represented by some 30,000 Nestorians, who live close to the Turkish frontier, about

## Background

50,000 Armenians, most of whom are scattered in various Persian towns with their headquarters at Julfa, near Isfahān, and some 4000 Roman Catholics in Julfa, Teheran and Azerbaijan.

Of the Zoroastrians only 9000 now have a home in Persia.

There are about 36,000 Jews, who in the large towns have their own quarters. The rest of the 10,000,000 of Persia are all Muhammadans. Of these rather less than one million, composed of Kurds, Arabs, and a few Turkomans, are orthodox Moslems or Sunnis. They are found chiefly in the west of Persia on the borders of Turkey. The remainder are Shiah, and are dissenters from orthodox Islam. From Jews, Parsis and Moslems, numbers have joined the new cult of Bahaism, an offshoot from Islam.

In these days of upheaval of thought and of custom, of development of ways and means, of enlargement of outlook, and of greater uniformity, it is strange to find a country in parts of which life still goes on as it has done for a thousand years. True, the last twenty years have seen great changes in thought and outlook even in the land of the Shah, but this is chiefly in the large cities, which have contact with the outside world, and there principally among the men.

Enormous tracts of country are desert; a very small proportion of land is under cultivation, and though methods and implements are clumsy and antiquated, and the water supply scant, the soil is good, the sunshine glorious, and splendid fruits and crops result. Yet the agricultural and mineral wealth of the country is scarcely touched. Railways are almost unknown and transport slow and difficult. There are few factories and little co-operation.

## Background

For centuries the woman's lot in Persia has been a hard one; she has been fettered, her development has been impossible, and her whole outlook cramped and darkened. Even the joys of motherhood have brought but little sunshine into her life.

Here and there enlightened women may be found, women who are trying to free themselves from the antiquated trammels imposed upon them by custom and religion. In such women one realizes the force of character and power their sex possesses, but which are lying for the most part dormant in their fellow country-women.

In these sketches of woman's life and surroundings in Persia the idea is to try to show her as she is to-day: her personality, her powers, her ways of doing things, her joys and sorrows. No one picture can do this, for, though they may have many common characteristics, the lot and life of town and country women and of the tent-dwellers vary to a great extent. Besides these, who may be looked upon as the Persian women proper, all of whom are Moslems or members of the Bahai sect, there are Parsis, Jews and Eastern Christians.

To get even an outline picture of Persian women and their ways it will be necessary to take a closer look at all of these; and it must be remembered that they are being looked at by one pair of eyes, and more or less from one point of view, and that the desire is not to criticize but to understand.



## CHAPTER II

### PARSI, JEWISH & ARMENIAN WOMEN

THE Parsis or Zoroastrians are the sole survivors of the pure Iranian or Persian race. Parsi is a word akin to Persian, and refers to race. Zoroastrian, a follower of Zoroaster, refers to religion. The actual period when Zoroaster lived is unknown; in all probability it was between 1000 and 700 B.C. The faith he taught was the national religion of Persia for many centuries. The Magi who followed the star to Bethlehem were probably Zoroastrians. Many of their sacred writings are said to have perished in the burning of Persepolis, but Pliny, in the second century, speaks of two million verses as being still extant! Making allowance for this generous computation, Zoroaster must have handed down a perfect storehouse of teaching to his followers.

Until the Arab invasion in the seventh century this had long been the dominant faith of Persia. When the creed of the Prophet was forced upon the country, many had no choice but to accept it; others, unwilling to change their faith, left their native land and settled in India, and only a small remnant held both to the faith and to the land of their fathers. Hence the wealthy and prosperous Parsi settlements in India to-day, and the remnant of about 9000 found in Yezd and Kirman and the surrounding villages in Persia. Here they have the character of being honest, industrious, intelligent, truthful, moral,

## Parsi, Jewish & Armenian Women

and better than their Moslem neighbours, with whom they never intermarry. In Yezd they have a large quarter of their own, with cleaner and wider streets than are found in the Moslem part of the town. They have good gardens and well-kept land, as agriculture was in the past upheld by their religion. Some are engaged in the silk industry and in husbandry, while many are merchants. In the Zend Avesta, their sacred book, it is written that "whoso cultivates barley, cultivates righteousness," but at present they are more a commercial than an agricultural people.

Their belief is still in the conflict between good and evil. The world is looked upon as the battle-field of two contending spirits, eternal and creative in their origin and action—the great wise God Ormuzd, or Ahura Mazda, and the wicked spirit Ahriman. The conflict is not believed to be hopeless nor is it destined to be perpetual. The light, the sun, the fire are the symbols of Ahura Mazda; therefore the sacred fire is always burning in their temples, and when they pray they face the sun. The name "fire-worshipper" is a misnomer; they do not worship the sun or the fire, but the One whose presence and character these symbolize. The sun in the Persian symbol is a relic of the past when it was the emblem of the so-called "fire-worshippers."

In many ways there is wide divergence between the teaching of Zoroaster and the religion as now practised. His followers claim to be monotheists and object most strongly to any change of religion either in the way of conversion to Zoroastrianism or perversion from it. They claim that the only way to be a Parsi is to be born of Parsi parents. Their faith seems to be the one thing that holds them together. Yet in Persia many are being strongly influenced by Bahaism, of which more later.



A PARSI AND HIS WIFE AND CHILDREN.

This man was gardener to the Telegraph Director in Yezd. The flower pots contain orange trees. The rug is a gilim.



## Parsi, Jewish & Armenian Women

A practice of which they are very tenacious is the investiture with the sacred thread, and in many cases also with the sacred shirt.

Boys and girls at about the age of twelve are invested with these before a solemn assembly and are forbidden ever to lay them aside. To walk even a few steps without them is an unpardonable sin.

Another binding custom is the disposal of the dead, burial, as defiling to the earth, being abhorrent to the Parsi. *Dakhmehs*, or towers of silence, are built outside the cities. No one but the professional bearers of the dead may enter these towers. The upper part of the tower is reached by a winding road or stairway, and at the top there are gratings "clothed with the light, facing the sun," on which the bodies are placed. Here birds of prey quickly dispose of the flesh, and in time the bones fall through into the central pit below.

In Persia the Parsis long laboured under many disadvantages. They might not build their houses as high as those of the Moslems. They might not ride through the town. The style and colour of their clothing was also restricted.

Parsi women until recent years were uneducated and ignorant. Now education is desired for them. The English school for Parsi girls in Yezd is largely attended, and the Parsis themselves have opened another. *Dāri*, an unwritten language, is chiefly spoken by the women, who do not readily understand modern Persian.

Marriage with next of kin is not permissible. Polygamy is unknown.

The women wear baggy trousers which reach to the ankles; over these they have long full coats; coloured handkerchiefs are worn over the head and a *chādar* folded like a shawl. The skirt and trousers are

## Parsi, Jewish & Armenian Women

usually made of material with very broad stripes of bright colour. Many of their clothes are made of the silk which is woven in Yezd.

The following account of a Parsi wedding was written by an English lady who was present:—

“I went for part of a Parsi wedding, the bride being one of Miss B.’s schoolgirls, a very bonny girl of fifteen. The guests had assembled at 1 P.M., and the afternoon had been spent in talking, playing the timbrels, tea, and sweet-eating till 5 P.M., when the groom’s best man came with a number of friends bearing four large wooden trays, one full of apples, pears and pomegranates for the bride’s male relations; one with bread and a kind of sweet for which Yezd is famous, which looks like spun glass or raw silk; the third contained the bridal dress provided by the groom; the fourth loaves of sugar for the bride and the members of her family. The bread and sweets were handed to the guests, and when the men retired the bride was adorned for her husband in bloomers and a flowing robe of green and cinnamon silk, with a long sort of jacket of cloth of gold; a green silk shawl for the head was fastened by a heavy gold ornament on the forehead, and from it hung many gold coins. Silver bangles, a gold ring set with an emerald, and a very handsome talisman, the size of a breakfast saucer, in bas-relief representing Zardushti (the Parsi prophet), the sacred fire and various scenes in his life—these two were suspended on a silver chain with two talismans like snuff-boxes containing the Zardushti prayers. Then all the friends in turn saluted the bride and offered a sprig of myrtle and a pomegranate (typical of life and fruitfulness): this was nearly over when I arrived. Then the timbrels began. Everyone laughed their loudest and talked at the tops of their voices (no one seemed to

## Parsi, Jewish & Armenian Women

attempt to listen) till 8.30, when a thundering knock brought silence and a scrimmage for chādars, for the best man and his friends had come to ask the bride if she wished to marry the groom! The green silk shawl was spread over her as if she were asleep. The men came near, and the best man, in a stentorian voice, asked: 'Do you, Goher, child of Shireen (sweet) and Khuda Parast (God-worshipper), wish to marry Mehriban?' The bride did not reply. The man faced his friends, 'She did not answer,' upon which they all yelled to wake her. Eleven times this was repeated, louder and louder, till the bride said 'Yes,' which was the signal for shouts of joy and a headlong rush to tell the groom. A minute later the bride's father came from an inner room carrying a large bundle, the groom's clothes, which the bride presented. To fill up time the timbrels were again brought out, and about an hour later the groom arrived, and tea was served to him and his friends, then to the bride and women, and the procession was formed, preceded by lights, timbrels and the dowry, to go to the groom's house. Every few minutes the bride stopped and said: 'I will go no farther till you pay my way.' Each time, after a good deal of argument, the groom gave her money, which goes towards the cooking utensils which she has to provide. At the house the priest was waiting with a pan of sacred sandalwood fire, round which all the company walked three times. Then the husband led the bride into the side room, and all the women who had come with her stood round the room. The bride and bridegroom sat down on a handsomely covered mattress, and then his sister and her mother uncovered her face. Next they took off their right socks and put their feet together; some water was brought, and the groom washed first his foot, then hers,

## Parsi, Jewish & Armenian Women

then his right hand, then hers, then his own face, then hers. A large glass of sherbet was brought, which he sipped and she finished. Then he produced a large black silk handkerchief with coloured border, to dry their faces, hands and feet. Then all the company said, 'May your eyes be enlightened, may you live a hundred and twenty years,' and left the couple to wedded bliss. The only religious ceremony is at the groom's house, where the bride's best man is her proxy, and is married to the groom, while the priest's boys ring little silver bells and the priest mutters prayers."

The Jewish element, though alien, has been in Persia since the Babylonian captivity. In most of the large cities there is a distinct Jewish quarter which, bad as some parts of a Moslem city may be, is sometimes worse. Many of the trades followed by Jews are those which Moslems will not touch.

The Jewish women are not veiled, but they adopt the black outdoor chādar worn by all Persian townswomen and keep their faces well covered. In their own houses they wear moderately long full skirts, with a jumper-like upper garment and a jacket. A muslin square folded cornerwise is worn over the head and pinned under the chin. Their hair and eyes are mostly dark, but bright auburn hair is sometimes seen, and there are many very pretty children with regular and beautiful features. Speaking generally, they are affectionate and intelligent, hard-working and painstaking.

Language is easy to them. Hebrew is the language of their worship, and Persian of their everyday intercourse with the Persians, and English and French are looked upon as leading to advancement and money-making.

Many are educated at the French and English and



## Parsi, Jewish & Armenian Women

American schools, and it is a common thing for a Jewish girl to go to a Moslem *anderūn* to teach French to Persian ladies.

The girls are betrothed when they are very young, eight or nine, but not married until they are about sixteen, and as a rule there is no great disparity in age between husband and wife. Most of the family names are familiar as Bible ones, as Ezra, Eliahu, Juseff, Isaac, Manasseh, and so on; and among the women there are a good many Esthers and Saras and Batias; but there are also such names as Taous, meaning peacock, Murvarēd, meaning a pearl, Shushani, meaning lily, as well as names which may be considered Persian, such as Sultanat, Kishva, Nosrat and Kāfi. The latter means "enough," and is often given when a boy would have been a much more welcome arrival than a girl. This, of course, is almost always the case in the East, and so the name is often given, but one is sorry for the bearer of the name.

Many Jewesses do beautiful embroidery; others make cotton tops for shoes, while in Yezd a large number of women are employed in silk-carding.

There are various places of pilgrimage, and Jewesses are often met with on the way to these shrines. For instance, there is a shrine some fifteen miles from Isfahān said to be the burial-place of "Lady Esther"—not the queen, as her tomb is at Hamadan. There is a large burying-ground attached, and the tanks and flowing water which are prescribed for the ceremonial washing of the dead. No Jewish interments take place in the city, and very pathetic are the processions out to this nearest burying-place.

Though Persians have never persecuted the Jews, they treat them with the utmost contempt.

## Parsi, Jewish & Armenian Women

The Parthians, Medes and Elamites who were present in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost were at the time, or later, subjects of the Persian Empire. In the centuries following, the Gospel was widely preached in the country, and we are told that multitudes became Christians, that churches were built and bishoprics founded. Terrible persecutions followed, and in the fourth and fifth centuries thousands were martyred. But in spite of this, as the Nestorian Tablet in China testifies, the Persian Church sent teachers as far as China and other distant parts of Asia. Nestorians and Armenians came under Persian rule, and to-day there are at least 80,000 members of these Eastern churches in Persia.

The best known, to me, of these Eastern Christians are the Armenians. Their ancestors were brought from Julfa, on the Araxes, in Armenia, by Shah Abbas the Great, a contemporary of Queen Elizabeth and one of Persia's greatest rulers. The idea in bringing these 20,000 Armenians was that they should instruct the Persians in the arts and crafts of which they knew so much.

A tract of land on the south side of the Zindeh Rud, or Living River, on the north side of which lay the then capital city of Isfahān, was given to the Armenians on which to build and settle down; this settlement they called Julfa, after their old home. To-day Julfa is a quiet little place, with narrow streets and high walls, but with a clean and well cared-for appearance. It has a cathedral and twelve Gregorian churches, also Anglican and Roman churches. Each sect has good schools and education is general. Julfa has several large gates, which are locked at night for safety. Many of the Armenians are wealthy merchants; others are employed in Government offices, banks, merchants' offices,

## Parsi, Jewish & Armenian Women

and so on. Most of the large towns in the country have small Armenian colonies. There are also a number of Armenian villages in Feridān and in Chahar Mahal.

The picturesque national dress is now only worn by elderly women, as the young women and girls wear garments closely approximating to European dress in the house, and out of doors merely the long black chādar as worn by Moslem women over their house dress, but no veil. This chādar will probably disappear before long, as many prefer a coat and skirt, and a long silk scarf wound round the head and thrown over the shoulder; some are even aspiring to hats. Armenians, though, are very conservative, and the older men shake their heads and say that they don't know what the girls are coming to, and that they won't allow *their* daughters to adopt such advanced modes; but nevertheless the daughters are doing it.

The old-fashioned dress still worn by the older women, and seen at its very best on high days and holidays, is cumbersome, and consists of various long garments, the outer one being of beautiful scarlet cloth or cashmere shawl, braided and trimmed with fur, and fastened with silver buttons. A heavy loose silver belt always finishes this costume. Gold necklaces, gold or silver beads and many rings are also worn by those who can afford them. A tall head-dress is worn, over which several handkerchiefs are tied, and, most important of all, a triangular piece of white cambric is folded several times and tied round the chin and mouth. Woman's silence before her superiors in sex and age has in the past been as important in an Armenian as invisibility and the covering of her eyes has been in a Moslem woman. The correct outdoor dress worn with this old-time costume is a white chādar.

The village women still adhere to their old style of

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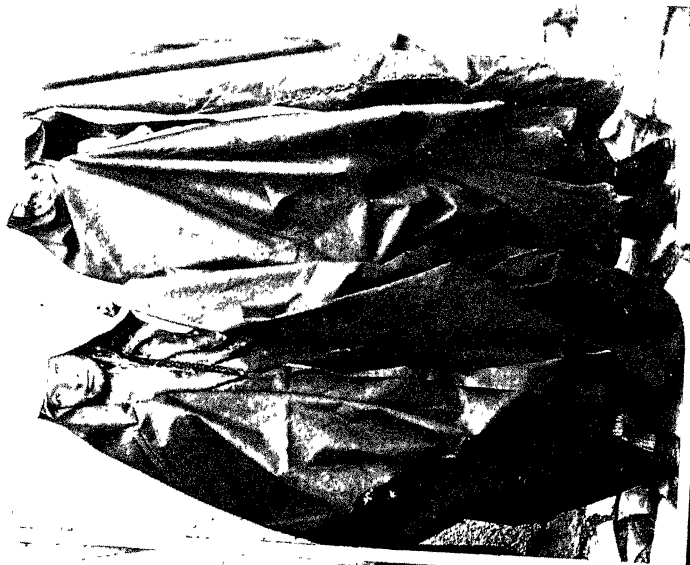
dress, but wear a large coloured apron, generally of coarse red cotton stuff, and ornamented with white china buttons. The head-dress as worn by villagers is often nearly a foot high, and is swathed with the same red material of which the apron is made, with silver coins and chains twisted in and out. The *moutne*, or mouth cloth, is also worn, but it is fastened right over the top of the nose and is only lowered for eating. One of these village women as a patient in a hospital bed is a problem for the nurses, as she strongly objects to the removal of any article of attire, especially the head-dress.

There is more home life among the Armenians than among other dwellers in Persia. Marriages are to a great extent arranged by the families, but here again the young people now have many opportunities of meeting, and are taking things much more into their own hands. Armenian brides may be sixteen or eighteen, or older. The betrothal, or, as they often call it, the "engagement," is a festive occasion, with many guests and a great deal of sweet-eating, at the bride's house. With many girls marriage is not looked forward to with pleasure, and behind the scenes there are often tears and many expressions of sympathy from girl friends. When the wedding day comes there are separate festivities at the houses of the bride and bridegroom. At the bride's house there will be a great number of invited guests. Most Armenian houses have long narrow guest-rooms, and for any function there is a large table in the middle of the room laden with cake, fruit, wine, sweets and flowers. Tea is brought in in large cups, on large trays, with milk and sugar. The chairs are generally arranged straight round the room with their backs to the wall. Anything much stiffer it would be difficult to imagine. After a time the bride goes to another room with her



A JEWESS OF SHIRAZ AND HER SMALL SON

Notice the charm, a blue bead or button in front of the boy's hat  
Jewesses do not veil, though they wear the ordinary Persian



UPPER CLASS PERSIAN WOMEN IN OUT-DOOR DRESS

The veils are kept down when the wearers are out of doors,



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female relatives and friends, and here, while she changes her clothes, they hover about, holding lighted candles decorated with gold paper. The bride's hair has to be done elaborately, and every garment changed. When she is ready she is very much like an old-fashioned English bride—white brocade, with lace and chiffon, a veil and orange blossom, white gloves and shoes, and a bouquet—but the art of flower arrangement has scarcely reached Persia yet. While she is getting ready the elder members of the family and guests dance in the compound. This dance is a slow, weird movement: the dancers hold hands and move round in a circle, and from time to time hold up various articles of clothing, such as a coat or waistcoat, which are part of the bride's present to the bridegroom. There are always some hired musicians playing on *tars* and tom-toms.

About the time that the bride is ready, vigorous knocking will be heard on the front door announcing the arrival of the bridegroom with his friends. Her nearest male relative, father or brother, must open the door and welcome the bridegroom. The procession will then start for the church, headed by the musicians, who every now and then stop and refuse to proceed until more money is given to them.

I am indebted to an Armenian friend for the following description of the wedding ceremony:—

“The bride and bridegroom attend at the door of the church and await the clergyman, who, dressed in vestments, descends from the altar and meets the pair at the door. He then solemnly explains the meaning of marriage, explaining in very simple language the duties of both husband and wife. He explains the thorny path of life and how they must bear the burden together, and love right through life for better or for worse, etc. Then

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immediately after he asks the fatal question, to the groom: 'Will you be lord of this woman?' He nods his head and whispers 'Yes.' Then he turns to the bride and says: 'Will you be obedient to your lord?' She nods and says 'Yes.' (But they don't mean it!) The priest asks the question three times, and after receiving an affirmative answer in each case, he blesses them and then invites the pair to go to the altar for the ceremony. If the girl or boy says 'No,' the priest merely tells them to go home without entering the church. I think it's a delightful custom. It is more serious than the custom of the Western churches."

After various prayers and injunctions, part of the bride's veil is put over the bridegroom's head and a silver cross placed over both heads. A sealed green cord is put round the bride's neck and a red cord round the bridegroom's neck; the cross is put into the bridegroom's pocket, where it remains until the priest asks for it.

The Armenian Church follows our Lord's teaching about divorce.

After the ceremony the festivities are continued at the bridegroom's house and are often kept up all night. The newly married couple will make their home with the bridegroom's parents.

Housework, children, cooking and knitting have long filled a woman's horizon. Housework means much less there than in England. Women do scarcely any shopping, this being done by the men. Armenian servants in European houses always expect two or three hours off in the afternoon to shop for their own households. All this means that the women have a good deal of spare time, but they are not idle. Some do most elaborate silk knitting, socks, caps and bags, while the majority knit coarse white cotton socks universally worn by



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Persian and Armenian men. The women of three generations may often be seen standing or sitting at their own front doors knitting. They knit socks and stockings from the toe and go up to the leg. They always use five needles, and hold their cotton with the left hand like the Germans.

Nowadays the outlook of Armenian girls is broadening. In Julfa there are good libraries, and Armenian, French and English books and papers are largely read. They are very proud of their Armenian literature, much of which is the work of Russian Armenians. Many houses have a musical instrument, a harmonium, or a *tar*, an instrument very like a mandolin. These are made in Julfa. Gramophones are also becoming very general. Armenian music as heard in the churches is not attractive to Western ears; on special festivals such as Easter the choirs are composed of boys and girls, all wearing long straight cotton surplices.

Many Armenian girls in Teheran, Julfa, Isfahān and elsewhere now take up teaching either in private houses or in schools; and numbers have become hospital nurses, some proving themselves most capable and efficient. Many have a distinct sense of vocation and patriotism. The sufferings of their own people in Armenia cut them to the quick, and they are ready to do all that lies in their power to help them. Kindness and practical sympathy are strong traits in Armenian women, and they do much to help poorer relatives and neighbours.

The idea of keeping back bad news is very strange. Supposing a son or husband dies in some other part of the country or abroad, the last people to be told are the nearest relatives. Everyone else in the place may know, but not until a day arrives which has been decided upon by those to whom the news has been

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sent, are the actual family of the deceased told of their loss.

Though the Armenians are home lovers, they are great wanderers. Every spring a large party of men and boys leave Julfa for India, Java, or elsewhere. Numbers of the boys go to Calcutta to school when they are fourteen or fifteen, but almost invariably do they, in later life, come back to Julfa to marry. In many cases the bride will go away with him, but numbers of wives are left with their parents, the husbands coming back at long intervals.

Visiting is very popular among the Armenians. Most Christian names are those of saints or flowers. Every saint has his or her special day in the calendar, and instead of keeping birthdays they keep what they call "name-days." There is one day for Mary, another for John, another for John the Baptist, and so on, and when these special days come round you are expected to call on all your friends who have this special name. Christmas and Easter are again great times for visiting. At their Christmas, which falls twenty-six days after ours, there are four or five days devoted to this friendly intercourse.

I have paid as many as a hundred and twelve calls in four days and been most hospitably entertained, eating sweets, and drinking tea or coffee in nearly every house. It is a delightful custom, because everyone is in and ready for visitors, and in a short time it is possible to see scores of one's friends. As soon as you knock, the front door is opened and you are taken into the room which is set apart as the guest-room during the festival. Very often it is a summer room and, so, very cold in January. Sometimes a brazier of hot charcoal is brought in; if not, they always suggest lighting the fire. In the smaller houses where the living-room is being used as the guest-room, it is warmed

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with the *kursí*—i.e. a pan of charcoal under a low wooden table, the latter being covered with a wadded quilt. In the poorest house sweets and nuts will be ready, and often coffee is being kept hot for visitors. In well-to-do houses there are numbers of plates of sweets and nuts and biscuits on the table, and tea and cake are usually brought in. You first wish that your friend's *eed*, or feast, may be blessed. Then you have a little general conversation and inquire about all the members of the family, various sweets being offered by different people in turn. The Armenians are fond of being photographed, and in almost every house there are numbers of photographs not only of themselves, but of relatives and friends who are in Java or India, England or America. Very often there is a new wedding or family group to be admired, and all sorts of things commented on. The difficulty is not to find subjects for conversation, but for everyone to get in all they want to say in the necessarily short time which can be spent in each house. As a rule the men go out visiting, and sometimes the girls; the elder women are always at home during all the visiting days of the feast. Most Armenian women know a little Persian; some a little English. I knew Persian and a very little Armenian, and I remember only one visit among hundreds where there was any difficulty about conversation, and in that house they knew only Armenian. I shall always retain the happiest recollections of my dealings with the Armenians of Julfa, especially the women and girls, among whom I have many friends.

## CHAPTER III

### MOSLEM WOMEN OF THE TOWNS

**I**N the Persia of olden days women had an honourable place; they were held in respect, and we may conclude that they were of equal rank with the men. Sons never sat in the presence of their mothers. This condition of society was found by Zoroaster and to a certain extent secured by him.

What a contrast is seen in the position of the women of Persia to-day. Behind the veil out of doors, behind the curtain indoors, left out of every social function, public or private, in which men play any part, they are seldom educated, trusted, valued or respected. How can a country progress with its womanhood handicapped to this extent?

We have seen something of the life and customs of various women living in Persia, but none of these would be spoken of as Persians, unless it be the Parsi remnant.

The Persians of to-day are Muhammadans or Moslems of the Shiah persuasion, and it is with the Moslem women of the towns that we are now chiefly concerned. In the towns the best and worst of the people are found. There is, of course, more contact between Westerners and the townspeople; there is more education, and more attempt at advancement and progress than amongst the villagers and tribespeople. About one-fourth of the population are town-dwellers. The customs of Persian towns differ from each other far more than they would if the country

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had extensive railway and postal systems, and a reasonable number of daily newspapers.

The women who ever leave their own towns are the exception. Some go on pilgrimage and a few may remove to other towns if their husbands' business takes them there. Women dislike leaving the town they know, as, owing to the numerous restrictions under which their lives progress, it is very difficult for them to make friends in a new place, and they constantly regret having left their previous place of abode.

Royal ladies are allowed to visit only their own relatives. They never go out except in a closed carriage with a eunuch on the box. In passing through a town the blinds or shutters of the carriage will generally be drawn, but riders often precede it, crying out: "Men, turn your eyes away!" Sometimes they are allowed to drive in the desert, when they may have the windows open. Every respectable townswoman and girl, be she rich or poor, wears a black, or very dark blue, *chādar*, which envelops her completely. This may be made of the cheapest sateen or of rich corded silk or satin. Over this a long white cambric veil is worn, reaching from the top of the forehead to the knees. This has a small lattice of the finest needlework over the eyes, and is fastened at the back of the head by a clasp. The most recent fashion in woman's outdoor dress is the substitution of a square black horsehair shield. This dress, however, will be considered in detail in a later chapter. It is a complete disguise, and a man has difficulty in recognizing his own wife in the street. She, through her veil, may easily see him. The way a woman carries herself, her size and height, and the ornament fastening her veil at the back are the most possible ways of recognition.

The veil accounts for many things in the life of a

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Persian woman. The outward appearance is with most people an index to what is within. A veiled face often means a veiled heart and mind. The veil is insisted on by the men, who will not allow their women to be seen by any strange man. During recent years various unsuccessful attempts have been made to discard the veil. Some hundreds of women once took sanctuary in a mosque in Teheran, saying they would not come out until they could come out unveiled. After a long time of useless resistance they came out as they went in.

The wife of a Persian official who had been living for some years in Constantinople, on coming back to Persia went out, as she had done in Europe, without a veil. The *mujtahid*, or chief priest, sent a message warning her not to do this, and that if she still persisted she would be beaten. On the Teheran tramways there are compartments reserved for women. The occupants are all very jolly and friendly among themselves, and interested in any foreign woman who joins them. I was talking to a veiled figure sitting beside me one day, and she told me of the delights of a few months which she had spent in Switzerland when she wore European dress, and of the trial that it was to be obliged again to wear her national dress.

While they may envy more reasonably dressed women, yet they look upon their own dress as a necessary evil. Except the royal ladies, most women when veiled are free to go and come as they like, unless they have very strict husbands or mothers-in-law. Their disguise gives them greater opportunity for carrying out their own devices than if they went openly, and is really a danger rather than a safeguard.

In the principal roads veiled women, or "*les dames fantômes*," as Pierre Loti calls them, may be seen going

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along in twos and threes as though they had no right to be there. They may be going out to a garden to spend the day, or to the cemetery to visit the grave of some friend or relative who has recently died. They may be going to or from a river or stream, where the family washing is done, with big bundles of clothes on their heads, or to and from the public baths. A woman is never seen drinking tea in a public coffee shop, where the men gather in scores. If she goes to a mosque she must sit behind a screen. If she prays it must be inside the walls of a house, not in the street or bāzār or by the wayside, where men pray.

If you want to understand something of the environment and outlook of a Persian woman you must go to her in her own house or invite her to come to see you. Persians are very hospitable and inquisitive; they also have a sense of their own importance. All these traits are ministered to by a visit from a foreigner. I describe below a few of such visits.

We were spending some of the hottest weeks of the summer in a garden a few miles from Isfahān. A message was brought to me one day that a princess was staying in her garden house, a quarter of a mile away, and wished me to go to see her. I accepted the invitation, and at the time fixed, one hour before sunset on the following day, I went. The house was a small one, consisting of three rooms, a large verandah, a tiny kitchen and sherbet-house, where pipes, tea and sherbet were prepared. My hostess was a niece of the reigning Shah. She was very polite and friendly. There were some gay flower-beds near the house; the rest of the garden was an uncared-for orchard. We sat on the verandah and had tea, and then walked about the garden. She was very proud of her children, three nice-looking boys and a baby

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girl. There were numbers of servants, men and women, and a eunuch in charge of everything. We talked about all sorts of things, the princess being especially interested in European customs. She was an educated woman, and read a good many French books. I suggested a return visit. She said that when she was at her town house her father, who was a powerful and autocratic prince, would not allow her to visit any houses but those of her relatives, but that as she was away from the town she could please herself, and would very much like to come to see us. She promised to fix a day. The day before the visit a message was sent asking me to send all men, servants and gardeners, away for the afternoon, and to arrange to receive the visitors downstairs. The house had a very pleasant upper storey, but her husband said that a man crossing a desert road, more than half-a-mile away, might see her, and that she must not go upstairs. The question of the men was most inconvenient, as we had only men-servants, and there was no one else to bring in the tea and prepare the *kalyān*, or water-pipe. However, I asked a Persian woman whom I knew to come and perform these kind offices.

Two hours before sunset was the time fixed. We arranged a really good English tea, followed by ices, which is a very different thing from Persian tea and sweets. Rather before the time our guests arrived—not only the lady and her four children, but nine or ten women-servants and the eunuch. They all came in, the lady and her children choosing to sit at the table and the rest of the people on the floor. They all sampled the various cakes and jams and there was very little left. Among other things, there was a loaf of English bread on the table. This disappeared, and later on, when we were out in the garden, one of the young princes produced it



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from his capacious pocket, and he and his brothers pulled it to pieces and ate it. They were much attracted by an English mail-cart which we had, and insisted on giving each other rides in it while they ate ices. The lady wished to investigate every room, and was specially enchanted by our varied cooking utensils, and wanted to know what everything was for, and how it worked. The visit was very protracted, as the eunuch said that the princess was not to go home until it was dark as she might meet men on the road returning from work. This was an added difficulty, as there was no one to light and bring the lamps. This may sound rather helpless, but the lamp-room was a long way from the house, the Persian woman could not manage to light them, and I could not leave my visitors. However, candles solved the difficulty. They all left, having had an insight into English ways such as had not been possible before. The princess said she had never been, until that day, allowed to visit an English woman, and that everything was of interest to her.

After this she used to write the most wonderful invitations, and I often went to see her in town. The unsatisfactory part of visits to or from a lady of rank is that you never see her alone. You may be the only two sitting in state, so to speak, but there will be numbers of women standing around, listening to all you say and often joining in the conversation. In recent years we saw a good deal of the young princes, who were well-educated, nice youths, but the surreptitious eating of the loaf always came to my mind! Such manners were quite in order in Persian children.

Another visit which I paid to a princess, by invitation, was rather pathetic. The great lady was sitting on cushions in a large room and was in a most agitated frame of mind. The country was in a disturbed state, and

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there were rumours in the bāzār of trouble just outside the city. Her husband had a great deal to do with public affairs and she was very anxious about him. As anyone fresh came into the *anderūn*, or women's apartments, she would say: "*Che khaber hast?*" ("What news is there?") She constantly sent a servant out to tell the steward or some other man servant to go to the bāzār on the chance of hearing something. She told me that she might never visit except at the houses of relatives; also that she might not go to the mosque. Sometimes a mullā came to the house to give readings, and then she might sit behind a curtain and listen. She was educated, but how narrow and colourless her life was. She was most anxious to mount my bicycle in the compound. If you had seen her flowing draperies and her build, you would have felt, as I did, that the risk was tremendous. However, I held the bicycle and let her try to sit on the saddle, and this was enough.

In each case these ladies were the only wives of their respective husbands.

Another visit to a princess whose position was different may be of interest.

Her husband was a Bakhtiari chief, and was for a time governor of an important town. They lived in an old palace near the bāzārs and Lady Haig kindly took me to see her. We entered by a large gateway, and after crossing a compound and traversing a long passage we came out into another compound surrounded by the highest walls I ever saw. This was the *anderūn*. We were taken into a small room with beautifully decorated walls and ceiling. The floor was covered with most exquisite Persian carpets, and some were hung on the lower part of the walls. Our hostess was a girl of about twenty. She was nice to look at, and was dressed in a white brocaded silk frock, made in European style. She

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was wearing a wonderful necklace, and a pendant, which was almost like a breastplate, and bracelets, all of large rough emeralds mounted in gold. Her hair was hanging in long plaits down her back, and she had a muslin veil folded crossways over her head. I thought she also was a Bakhtiari, and was looking for the plaits, which it is their custom to bring round the neck and tie under the chin. I asked a good many questions about the Bakhtiari country but could get no satisfactory answers. At last I understood: she was not a tribeswoman, but of royal descent, which she traced back with great pride to Fath Ali Shah. Her confidential waiting-woman, who stood by her chair all the time, told us that the governor had nothing more to do with any of his other wives since he married the princess. She was better than any of the others. To us she seemed to have an air of indifference about everything. Yes, she was educated, and she wished her children to be taught. No, she never went out except when her husband changed his governorship, and then she drove the two or three hundred miles in a closed carriage. She walked in the large compound with its high walls, so high that no one could see her from any of the surrounding buildings. She liked Teheran better than Isfahān.

Tea was served in tiny glasses in silver holders, on silver trays; there was a great variety of sweets, biscuits and nuts, all on silver dishes, on a table in front of the hostess. She smoked cigarettes and invited us to do so.

It was near the city of Shiraz where I first met the three wives of Mirza H——. We were staying for a few days in a garden when an invitation came for my husband and me to dine with them that evening. We were conducted to the large compound where the gentleman of the house and his friends were to dine. Tea

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and smokes were at once brought and everyone was very friendly. After a time I saw a woman standing just inside the curtain which separated us from the *anderūn* compound; she was the chief wife and had come for me. In the adjoining compound there were several ladies and at first it was very difficult to differentiate between them. After sitting and talking for some time the order was given to bring the dinner, which we ate sitting on cushions around the cloth, which was spread on the ground. There were lighted candles with glass shades on the dinner-cloth, but beyond that all was dark. Presently I felt someone come and sit down behind me. I turned round, and there was a woman who proved to be the wife of the gardener. She poured out to me a torrent of words which at first I could not understand. Gradually she spoke more quietly, and told me that her only boy was lying very ill with small-pox, would I give her something to put on to allay the irritation, also some medicine to check the fever. She had come straight from him, and my hostesses seemed to think it was quite natural that she should do so. We helped her as far as we could, but requested that she should not come to our garden; we would send the remedies to her.

I exchanged several visits with these three fellow-wives and learned a good deal about their customs. They were unusually friendly with each other, and all had apartments in the same house in town. The chief wife was much older than the others, and had grown-up sons, which alone gave her a position of importance and security. Another wife was young and very plump, a much-desired condition, and had a fine curly-headed boy of about three, of whom she was immensely proud. The youngest and favourite wife was a Kurd, the daughter of a chief. She usually wore her native dress. Her hair

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was in a dozen or more plaits, each finished with a silk tassel below the waist. Her head-dress was more a hat than a chādar, and fastened on with strings of turquoise. One piece of hair was caught round and fastened to the top of this head-dress. Her fellow-wives always seemed very kind to her, and proud to show her off to their friends. The husband was a rich merchant, and this class more than any other keeps to the custom of having more than one wife. The poor cannot afford it, and the upper classes have come so much in contact with Western ideas and ways that they realize its disadvantages.

Another acquaintance of mine was a highly educated woman, clever, and capable both with her head and hands. She read and wrote Persian excellently, edited a newspaper, knew some French, used a sewing machine, and could turn out a coat and skirt or a "Paris dress" with the greatest ease. Her father had been an exceptional man for his race and faith, and she had far outstepped most of her countrywomen. The chief mistake in her upbringing had been her marriage to a disreputable man. She had money and influence, and her brothers held important positions. She left her husband, and later on, when she heard that he had taken a child wife, she obtained a divorce. I knew her intimately, and was in and out of her house at all hours. I read Persian history and the New Testament with her, and marvelled at her accurate knowledge and understanding. Her housekeeping was of great interest: she had a man-servant who did the shopping and any business matters for her, a woman cook, and a girl, who had some African blood, as her personal maid. This girl added distinction to the establishment, as she was very like the slaves owned by many wealthy people.

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She was not a slave, however, but merely a servant, who was free to leave at any time. My friend, for such I shall always consider her, was very keen on doing all she could by voice and pen for the uplifting of her Persian sisters, but of this later. This chapter is concerned with the everyday life of the majority of women, not with the outstanding activities of the few.

I once spent a night in a garden house with this lady and some friends of hers. I got there about sunset, and we sat out on a raised platform at one end of the garden for an hour or two. She had had this garden laid out according to her own ideas, even to the shape of the tank and the flower-beds. There was something out of the ordinary in sitting in this lovely garden in the exquisite clear and cool evening air, drinking tea and talking over the possibilities and the lessons of a garden with these beautifully dressed and cultured Persian women. About nine o'clock we went in and had a *recherché* little dinner of cutlets, curry, fried egg plant, fried eggs, grapes, walnuts and peaches. We, as usual, sat on the floor, but plates, forks and spoons were supplied. After dinner we went up on to the roof, where we sat until eleven o'clock. The moon was up, and the desert and mountain ranges in the distance stood out with a wonderful beauty. The stillness of the air was broken by the tree-beetles' melodious chant, the unwelcome buzz of the mosquitoes, the croaking of frogs in a stream below, and by voices from an encampment of villagers who had come from another village to reap my hostess's fields of corn and melons. Soon the human sounds ceased, and the appearance of two women-servants told us that bedtime had come. As my friend had suggested, my man had brought a bundle of bedding for me, but where I was to sleep was not evident. On the roof was a

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roofed-in enclosure with corner-posts only, and under this there was an enormous mosquito curtain; it was like a great meat safe, at least fifteen feet square and six feet high. Inside this there were three mattresses and bedding put ready. To my surprise, two of the ladies and I were to sleep there. It rather took me aback, but it proved most comfortable. We were helped to undress, and after we were safely lying down the door of the "safe" was fastened and the servants withdrew. I never spent a night anywhere where I had a better view of the surrounding country, but sleep was a long time in coming. When I awoke about six o'clock the next morning my companions had gone below to dress, and a servant was waiting with a jug of water which she poured over my hands, and having washed them, she poured some more over, with which to wash my face. As I looked below I saw the younger members of the party performing their ablutions at the edge of the tank. When I was dressed and went downstairs, a nice breakfast of tea and bread and eggs was ready. After this we had a walk through the garden and a discussion with the gardener on the necessity of planting another peach-tree as soon as the one last planted begins to bear fruit. I left for my day's work feeling that I had certainly come nearer to Persia's womanhood than ever before.

Something more must be said about the humbler homes of the towns and their occupants. Hospitality is so ingrained in these people that one sometimes hesitates about going to see the poor without previously begging them not to prepare anything. However, this seldom does much good, and as soon as one arrives someone bustles away and begins to prepare the samovar, or Russian urn, in which water is boiled. A tray is generally ready with tea glasses or cups, and lump sugar.

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Though the poor can seldom afford this for themselves, it is always provided for guests. Meanwhile one sits down on the edge of a mattress or on a piece of carpet which has just had a good shake. Various polite questions are exchanged as to one another's health, and the health of the various members of the two families. Presently the samovar boils and the tea is made. If one asks for tea without sugar they do not like it; it seems to them inhospitable to offer "tea empty," and they say that it is not good for you. In days gone by I have been in houses where the tea-glasses were at once taken away and washed in the tank, the largest amount of water available; or, with very strict Moslems, the glasses that had been used by an unbeliever might be broken. In recent years the glass or cup has been merely rinsed out with water from the samovar, and I have known instances when a woman has taken up my tea-glass and drained it to show there was no feeling but that of friendliness. A very poor woman was once having a cup of tea with me when she said: "Will you drink a little from my cup?" I asked her why she wanted me to do this, and she replied: "I am too poor to ask you to tea in my house, but you have given this glass of tea to me, haven't you? So if you take a sip from it you will be my guest." It struck me as being original.

Many of the houses of the poor in the towns consist of one room; other rooms open on to the same compound and are occupied by different families. When the weather is warm the women sit outside their rooms to smoke or to work. The publicity of a dwelling of this kind does much to make their lives worse than they need be. Everything is known, and anyone wishing to break through the customs of centuries has a bad time.



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The work done by women will be considered in a later chapter. Here it is sufficient to say that there are no industrial laws and all women's labour is very badly paid. So many women must support themselves that they are obliged to take what is given to them. It is a very usual thing for a man to spend all he earns on himself; sometimes he will feed a favourite child, but in very many cases nothing is given to the wife.

The number of beggars in the towns is dreadful. They sit by the roadside with their hands stretched out, often clutching at the clothing of the passers-by. They beg in the name of their prophet, and, if a Christian is passing, in the name of the Virgin, or even of "His Excellency Jesus." Whole families are often seen begging, and if anyone has a special affliction this will be brought prominently into notice.

On the surface many Persian women are light-hearted and indifferent; they are accustomed to their lot; they know of nothing better. Eating, drinking, smoking, sleeping and gossiping very largely fill the horizon for the rich. Marriage is a necessity, and children they must have if they are to keep their husband's favour.

For the poor, life is a struggle with poverty, hardship and ill usage. There is rarely what we understand as home life in any grade of society. There is no word for "home" in the language as it is not needed. Plurality of wives generally means a wreckage of anything approaching family life. Many a woman obtains a talisman or asks a European doctor for medicine to make her husband love her. There is little idea of doing anything in the way of home-making to attract his love. How can there be the rest and satisfaction of a real home when the wife knows that for a small reason she may be divorced and sent adrift, and then perforce must marry again? The

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only way to make home life is to raise the position of women.

Opium is a cause of far-reaching suffering. Both men and women are victims of this curse. It does not end, either, with adults; the craze may be passed on to their children both by heredity and habit.

There is much more in the life of Persia's women about which it is difficult to write. The more intimate one is with the inner life of the people the more shocks one gets. Their moral code is difficult to understand or to describe. Life holds no high aims, no ideals, little real love, no attractive professions, merely the one outlook, and after that old age, when no one wants them; and after that the dark; for the future life offers little of satisfaction or certainty to a Moslem woman.

Yet they are attractive and courteous, lovable and responsive to those who take the trouble to know them.

When women join openly in the affairs of men a great change will take place in society. A foreigner can never know more than half of the life of the people. No country rises above the level of its womanhood, and the condition of Persia's women goes a long way in accounting for the backwardness of the country. An educated Persian once said to me: "Persia will make no progress until its women are different; they have the first chance with the children and make them what they are." To my mind a change must also come over the attitude of the men towards the women. Enlightenment of mind and heart is needed for both men and women if Persia is again to take her rightful place among the nations of the Middle East.

The following lines were written by two Persian women, both of whom I knew well. The first wrote in

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English, the second dictated her thoughts in her own language :

“ Since the days of my childhood I have been told  
That in the sea of despair I was drowned,  
But the fire of thy love makes me as the gold,  
And the chain of thy love shall my foot ever hold.”

“ O sweet mulberry ! don't be sad,  
I am kind, I am with you.  
O little flower ! may thy rest be sweet  
As a piece of sugar candy.  
To see your face would be to me  
As the sunrise in my country.  
Come to my country that you may see  
And that you may say sweet words for me.  
A branch of beautiful flowers you are,  
My flower, only mine—  
God brings you to my remembrance,  
My flower, only mine.”

## CHAPTER IV

### VILLAGE WOMEN

PERSIA possesses no Lancashire, no Newcastle, no Black Country, no vast Metropolis where almost every great concern has its headquarters. Consequently half its people live and die in its 40,000 villages. A few of the larger villages have some special industry, but in the majority the work is mainly agricultural or pastoral, and owing to the difficulties of transport most villages are self-contained. Tea, sugar, oil, and a few other necessities of life are brought from the nearest town and sold in the village shops, but for the most part the people are clothed and fed by the fruits of their own labour. Some villages can boast of a large house owned by a nobleman who also owns the village and who stays there from time to time. His womenfolk will also spend a good part of the year there, and are generally a source of interest and sometimes of advantage to the village women. They will each have a separate set of rooms and of servants, and much gossip will trickle through to the village. Their clothes will be finer than those of the village women, their food richer and more abundant, but their liberty will be more curtailed than that of their poorer sisters.

Life for the women is much freer and healthier in the villages than in the towns. In the first place, their outdoor attire is better. It consists of a *chādar*, or sheet, of soft coarse cotton material, woven in the village,

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probably by the wearer. They wear no veils, but cover their faces most carefully, so that only one eye peeps out between the folds of the *chādar*. For the indoor dress cotton is universal; red prints are much worn, and the skirts are longer than those seen in the towns. A gay print or muslin *chādar-i-namaz*, or prayer *chādar*, is worn indoors. At least they are gay when they are new, but the method of washing and the exposure to the sun when drying, and often when in wear (as a woman would not appear in the compound if men were about without this long covering), very quickly gives them a drab or faded appearance. Coloured leather shoes with no back pieces, and with heels tipped with iron, are worn out of the house, which produce a noisy and awkward gait. Village women look very much like bundles as they shuffle along from house to house, or when doing their simple shopping.

Many countrywomen work in the fields. For instance, in the province of Ghilān, to the south of the Caspian, the planting out of the rice plants in the mud is done by the women, where they often work in a foot of water or mud. They take their share, too, in weeding and in harvesting. The fields round the villages may produce wheat, barley, maize, millet, cucumbers, melons, tobacco and opium. A great deal of work falls to the women in the way of gleaning and grinding wheat and other grain. In most village houses, too, bread is made by the women. A small piece of dough is kept back from one baking, and is rolled up in the cloth or sheep-skin on which the bread has been kneaded, and is put into the oven until the next baking day, perhaps three or four days off. When that day comes, this piece of dough, which has become fairly hard, is broken up, softened with hot water, and added to the flour and left

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to rise. When the dough is sufficiently risen it is divided into small pieces the size of a penny bun, which are rolled out with a very thin rolling-pin into round cakes. These will either be baked on a convex iron plate over a wood fire, or in a clay or brick oven, which, if of clay, is in the shape of an enormous jar. Either kind of oven is heated by a large fire of dry farmyard manure, or thorns, or wood, which is lighted in the oven. When sufficiently hot it is swept out and the bread is slapped on to the inner side, to which it adheres till it is baked. A small cushion is the instrument used for this "slapping" process. Most villages have a flour-mill worked by water within easy reach, but the women often find it easier to grind by the hand-mill in their own compounds than to carry heavy bags of grain and flour to and from the mill; expense too is saved, and there is not much current coin in a village. A great deal of payment is made in kind, and those who do not work for other people may have a piece of land and a few sheep and goats or cows of their own. Many of the little girls shepherd the flocks and herds in the fields or desert.

Persia has many beautiful, well-watered valleys, covered with gardens and vineyards. Here some wheat is grown, but more fruit, much of which is dried and sent away for sale. This drying process is often anything but hygienic, and people using fruit from the East would be well advised to wash it before use. Plums, apricots, peaches and figs are dried on the roof or in a corner of the compound; they need constant turning and are often fingered and sampled by the children of the house. Dust and flies also leave their mark on the fruit. In some villages quantities of seedless grapes are dried for sultanas. They are laid on brick or cement or gravelled floors, under cover, and some months elapse before they become the sultanas

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of commerce. The insides of grapes are often eaten out by wasps either before they are gathered or during the drying process. This accounts for all the hard, shrivelled currants and sultanas found in the low-grade fruit. Figs are threaded on string and hung up to dry. A very good kind of yellow plum is skinned and packed in large gourds, or in goatskins. Large quantities of these plums and figs and apricots and stoned and split peaches are exported, or sold in the bāzārs in the large towns. Apricot stones are also exported! Walnuts, almonds and pistachios are abundant and provide a good deal of work for the women. Dates only grow in the south of Persia. During the season the gathering and packing provide employment for thousands. Orange gardens are largely attended to by men. The universal and most prolific tree is the white mulberry: the yield from a large tree is tremendous. A mulberry-tree is often spoken of as a gift from God because it supplies the need of so many people. In Central Persia mulberries ripen before any other fruit and people are often ill from a surfeit. A man climbs a tree and shakes the branches, while the women hold a chādar underneath to catch the fruit. Large quantities of these also are dried for the winter, a favourite food being pounded walnuts and dried mulberries. Fruit is seldom cooked.

Butter and cheese are also made by the women. For the latter they use rennet: this is not prepared in any way, but is the actual substance as taken from the calf, a small piece of which is tied in a rag and does duty several times. When cheese is made, if it is to be stored for future use, it is packed in small goatskins, from which it extracts a great deal of flavour and many hairs! It is made from sheep's and cow's milk, and is very rich, and when it becomes green is looked upon by some

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Europeans as “as good as Gorgonzola.” A skin of cheese is often given as a present by a well-to-do villager.

To make butter, the cream is put into a large goat- or sheep-skin suspended by ropes. A woman stands at either end and pulls the skin towards her. This is continued, with more or less vigour, until the butter forms. The skin is then opened and the butter collected and rolled by hand into large balls weighing two or three pounds. A simpler method is to stir the cream round in a bowl or shake it in a bottle. The buttermilk is not washed out, nor is the butter salted. When bought by Europeans this must be done afterwards, and it is very often necessary to squeeze the butter through muslin, so as to dispose of all the unnecessary and objectionable extras which it contains. Curdled milk, or *māst*, a very superior kind of junket, is made in large quantities by the women, either for home consumption or for sale in the *bāzār*. It is usually made in earthenware basins of peculiar shape, glazed blue or green, which may hold from a pint to a gallon, but it, like milk, is sold by weight. These basins are placed on a large wooden tray with an inch-high rim, and in this way carried by a man on his head for ten or fifteen miles to the nearest town.

Every house does not possess a well, so that the women's work is increased by drawing and fetching water from the village well, or from a stream. When they do any washing, it is usually on the bank of a stream—this same stream may supply drinking water to people in the next village! The clothes are banged on stones in the stream, soap, on account of its cost, is seldom used, and ironing is never done except by tailors.

In many houses one or more hand-looms are found, the women and children weaving most of the material for their clothing. This process is not so simple as it sounds.



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The cotton is probably grown round the village and harvested by young and old of both sexes. The pods are broken up by the women and the husks and seeds removed. The cotton is then carded by the men with strange wood and wire implements, and next spun by the women. Again, it is dyed by the men and is then ready for weaving. Setting up these heavy, clumsy looms and putting on the warp is a tiresome job. If the weaving is silk, there is all the hatching, rearing and feeding of the worms to be looked after; then the winding of the silk from the cocoons.

Many beautiful carpets are made in the villages, the loom being fixed in the compound or on a verandah. Again, this is not a simple matter. The wool is first grown on the village sheep, then sheared, cleaned, washed, spun and dyed. The dyes are not bought ready-made in packets with full instructions for home dyeing. Some are made from walnut shells, grape skins, pomegranate rind, madder root, onion skin and so on. The time spent in making the dye and in dyeing the wool is considerable. Carpet weaving is a very slow process. A whole family often work at one loom; this accounts for the uneven weaving sometimes met with in Persian rugs.

But what about the inner life and the home life of these women? It is the exception to find a village woman who can read; they do not come into contact with the outer world, of which they are extraordinarily ignorant, and they know very little about their own religion: all they do know is just the everyday happenings in their own tiny corner of the world; many women know neither their own age nor that of their children. Home life as we know it is an unknown quantity. They are better off than the townswomen, because they have more to do and more interest in the things around them—the

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vineyard, the crops, the flocks and herds. They must clean and grind the corn and make the bread, and milk the cows and sheep and goats. They must weave the *karbas*, or coarse cotton material, and make the simple garments needed by themselves and their families.

Though in the well-to-do village homes there is a best room where the men receive their visitors, the whole family usually eat and sleep together: in the summer on the roof or in the compound; in the winter around the *kursi*. The evening meal is the chief one, and for this there is generally hot food. This may sometimes be seen cooking in a tightly closed saucepan, over a fire made of stable sweepings and bits of wood. This fire burns slowly between two big stones out in the compound, and the food cooks much as it would in a hay-box. It may consist of meat and wheat and some plums or quinces or vegetables. A more dignified meal would be *pilau*—*i.e.* rice boiled so that every grain is separate, and eaten with a stew or curry; but this needs more expensive cooking. Anything left over from the meal may be eaten for lunch the following day: failing this, the food is merely bread and a relish, either fruit, cheese or *māst*.

Some villagers are very hospitable. A friend and I were staying in a large village for a few days, and the chief man of the place insisted on our being his guests. This was done not by our staying in his house, but every morning he sent up, to the house which we were renting, the food and fuel required for the day's *ménage*: meat, fruit, vegetables, bread, tea, sugar, rice, charcoal, and everything that could be needed for us and our servants. One day we paid an afternoon visit to his house when he had a number of Persian visitors. We sat on cushions of honour at the head of the room, and

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generally listen most attentively. In a crowd of twenty or thirty there are sure to be several sick people, and bad eyes are very common, or a damaged hand or foot which has been neglected, or some other long-standing complaint. There is an idea in the villages that every European is a doctor, so, as soon as a foreigner arrives, people swarm round, hoping to get medicine and advice. If the visitors say they are not doctors or nurses, they are seldom believed, possibly because so many travellers are able to help them in some way from their own personal medical supplies, which must be carried on a journey.

It is difficult to imagine the lives of some of these village women. The men frequently take a journey to the nearest town for business or pleasure, but it needs a very big thing to take a woman there. Unless her family is a wealthy one, she will only be able to ride a donkey, and if very poor she must walk, carrying all that she needs with her. Patients often come a week's journey to a mission hospital. If very ill and unable to sit up, they will come in a large shallow basket on the back of a donkey. There are few villages for a hundred miles round the big towns which have English or American hospitals from which someone has not gone as a patient. Very wonderful are the stories they bring back of the marvellous feats of doctors and nurses, and of all their kindness and love. Very few villages can boast of a native doctor, so-called, and if they can, few can afford to consult him, and except in simple cases they are little the better for doing so.

Many villages are, for security, surrounded by high walls, with one or, perhaps, two gateways. Others are like large compounds, with the doors of all the houses opening on to the same enclosure. At night the flocks and

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herds are all driven in: their noises added to the fighting and barking of dogs, and the crying of children, can be better imagined than described. Such houses usually consist of one room and perhaps a cupboard or small dark storeroom. People welcome the summer, when they can sleep outside until the sun awakens them. They are little troubled by the noises. No wonder that there is no word for "home" in the Persian tongue.

Sometimes a woman of superior powers and intelligence may be met with who does her best to learn of European ways and ideals. Such a woman was Hadijeh, who lived in a village about twelve miles from Isfahān. Her husband had been a farmer, and after his death she was able to carry on the farm, and employed several men and farmed on a large scale, for Persia. Her business often brought her to the city, and when she was ill she came to the English hospital there. A friend and I were staying in Hadijeh's village for a few days, and she was constantly in and out of the house wanting to hear all she could from us. We were invited to her house to dinner, and to our surprise the room was lighted with our own lamps, the dinner was served up on our own dishes, and our plates, knives, forks, spoons and serviettes made their appearance. As she possessed very few things of the kind, she had asked our tableman to lend all that was needed. The house was a large rambling one and very much out of repair. In the room where dinner was served there were numbers of shelves, some almost up to the ceiling. These were packed with all kinds of things—European lamps and clocks and vases—and the more precious the things, the higher up they were put. Our hostess told us that we were invited to tea at a Sayyid's house the following day, and she evidently considered that this was a great honour. She offered to come and conduct us to the house.

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After polite greetings the tea was made and Hadijeh stood by the lady as she poured it out. Seeing that there was no tea-strainer for use, she stretched out the corner of her *chācat*, or muslin head-square, which is folded cornerwise and pinned under the chin, and the tea was strained through this. The *chācat* had probably been worn for weeks and was for use as well as ornament. The guest who noticed this kind attention was perplexed as to whether to be polite and take it, or escape drinking it by pressing it on one of the other guests, not her friend! In another house, the boy who was handing tea round—it was poured out by one of the less important wives—was, I noticed, cramming lumps of sugar into his mouth. On watching him carefully I saw that the lumps were coming out again, but smaller than when they went in. He evidently had no sugar-hammer, and thought that the lumps were too large, and so was kindly biting them in two. I steadily refused another cup of tea.

Manners and customs change much more slowly in the villages than in the towns. Thousands of villages are away from the main roads, where books or newspapers seldom penetrate, and where probably not more than one or two people would be able to read them if they did. In such villages, thought and life are bound to remain as they are. Once in a way someone who has been in contact with Westerners in a town or, if on a caravan track, some traveller passing through, may give a little insight into the great outer world of which these kindly, simple-minded village women know so little.

## CHAPTER V

### TRIBESWOMEN—THE BAKHTIARIS

THE remaining fourth of the people of Persia belong to the wandering tribes or Ilyāts. It is difficult to say definitely who these people are and when they first made their appearance in Persia. Some of them are said to be pure Irānians descended from the old stock, while Sir John Malcolm says that the first Turkish tribe appeared in Persia during the reign of Khosro, having come from the plains of the Volga. Some are of Arab and others of Turkish extraction, while some are truly Persian. But whatever their origin, the fact remains that they are very powerful, and to a great extent supply the fighting force of the country to-day.

Though they have many features in common, each tribe has its outstanding characteristic, and as it is impossible to consider them all individually, we will take the Bakhtiaris and Qashgais for detailed descriptions.

The Bakhtiaris are a large and powerful tribe, generally thought (though Lord Curzon says of their origin that it is "one of the unsolved and unsoluble mysteries of history") to be Irānian. They inhabit a mountainous district of some 25,000 square miles in S.E. Persia. Their territory is bounded on the north-east by the highland country of Chahar Mahāl, Feridān and Khamsar, and on the south-west by the plains of Ramuz, Shuster and Dizful. Lofty and rugged mountains separate them from their neighbours, and their character

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has been largely made by the nature of the country they inhabit. They are fearless and daring, hardy, intelligent and quick-witted. Risks have to be undertaken, and decisions made so quickly, owing to life in a land like theirs, with its precipitous mountains, swiftly flowing streams, heavy snowstorms, varied camping grounds, goatskin tents, enormous flocks and herds, and jealous and war-like and antagonistic neighbours. They have been compared to a combination of Rob Roy and a lowland shepherd, the likeness to Rob Roy being more clearly marked.

In the past they were probably more agricultural than pastoral; now their wealth comes from both crops and flocks and herds. Except the chiefs and their sons, some of whom have been educated in Europe, or in Teheran, there is little book learning in the tribe, and the knowledge of the outer world is a negative quantity.

They have no written history, little folk-lore or legend, and very little use for Muhammadanism. Most of the mosques are in a bad state of repair, and the mullās do little beyond giving names to children and taking part in weddings and funerals.

The story-teller is a very popular man, and always draws crowds to listen to his tales from Firduzi's Shah-Nameh, or some other classic.

While educated Bakhtiaris know Persian, they never use it among themselves. Their own language, which is called *zabané Lur*, or the tongue of the Lurs, is very different from Persian and has no written form. This probably accounts for the absence of a history of the tribe. The tribe is divided into the Haft-lang and Chahar-lang, who are descended from two brothers, who had respectively *haft*, or seven, and *chahar*, or four, sons. Sometimes one branch has been in the ascendant and at

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other times the other. At present the Haft-lang are in power. The chieftainship of the whole tribe is vested in the Ilkhani. This authority is confined to the ruling family, but does not necessarily pass from father to son, but to the next senior *khān*, or chief; very often it is a brother who is appointed successor.

During the last few years the *khāns* have held many important posts both in Teheran and in the provinces; several governorships have been in their hands, and the Ilkhani was prime minister in 1911.

Most of the virility left in Persia is found amongst the tribespeople, and for some time the Bakhtiaris have been stout defenders of national liberty, and one of the decisive factors in Persian politics. They supply the best soldiers in the country.

Bakhtiari women are more cheerful subjects than village or towns women. They are of far more value to their menfolk and therefore take a position of importance in the tribe. In former days all the women accompanied the men in the spring and autumn to the camping grounds in Chighakor and Garmsar. About fifty years ago the first house was built, and during the last twenty or thirty years the *khāns* have built castles where their women-folk lead a settled life, only a few of them going with the tribe to its summer and winter quarters. The wives and daughters of *khāns* are called *bibis*, and they have attained a position and power equalled by few of their Eastern sisters. When the *khāns* are away in Teheran or in distant provinces the women carry on all business matters, and direct the lives and work of their dependents. The Bakhtiari women seem, to a great extent, to occupy the position of the women of the long past. The *khāns* say that they wish their women to enjoy as much freedom as possible, yet they foresee possible difficulties when



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they come more in contact with town life, and must conform to a certain extent to Moslem customs. In their own country they are unveiled, and though many of them like to keep to their own fashions when they come to the towns, they lay themselves open to insult. A woman among her own people may see and talk unveiled with any man of inferior position. Owing to the authority she exercises, she is bound to have personal dealings with many of her dependents. She may not see any khān, except those closely related to her, until after the marriage of her eldest son.

Children are often betrothed when they are tiny, but the wedding does not take place for some years, and the marriageable age for a girl is steadily rising; it used to be eight; now fifteen or even seventeen is common. Marriages between cousins are very much sought after, and the children of such marriages are if anything superior in physique to others. But the mortality among all Bakhtiari children is very high. Venereal disease, tuberculosis, whooping cough, and the use of opium claim many victims. A very noticeable fact is the excessive mortality among boys. One khān lost ten sons in infancy, only one boy and a number of girls living to grow up. Excessive care is taken of the boys, but the result is not satisfactory. A bibi often employs a wet-nurse, who is always with her, and to feed the baby whenever it cries. As a rule these women never leave the foster-child they have nursed, staying on after marriage and bringing up the children of the next generation. As years go by the nurse becomes a confidential servant, and if she has children of her own they will be educated with those of her master.

Children are dressed very much as their parents are, and grow up far more quickly than English children. They all learn to ride and use a gun when quite small.

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Many of the girls become excellent horsewomen and crack shots. Sometimes girls are dressed like their brothers until they are ten or eleven, and are taken about by their fathers as if they were boys.

Both boys and girls are very quickly spoiled, as the parents understand nothing of the methods or value of child training. Children grow up with the idea that everyone and everything must be subservient to them, the only exception being the tutor, who has complete control during school hours. The khāns believe in education for both boys and girls. Many of the boys are now sent to Switzerland. A few years ago there were nine Bakhtiari boys at one time at school in Lausanne. Their mothers are very sad at letting them go and keep up a regular correspondence. Education is almost unknown amongst the tribespeople as a whole. The chiefs of the Bakhtiaris and Qashgais have repeatedly asked for English doctors and schoolmasters, promising to provide everything necessary in the way of hospitals, schools and salaries. With the Bakhtiaris this offer still holds good. A Scotch lady, Dr E. N. M. Ross, to whom I am indebted for some of my information about these people, once acted as doctor to the families of the khāns for a year or two, and very much enjoyed the experience. Missionary doctors, too, have come largely in contact with them both in the hospitals and in their own camping grounds and castles. If there is any serious illness in the houses of the chiefs, it is a usual custom to send a carriage to the hospital in Isfahān with an urgent request for a doctor. Last year a hospital camp was run for some months in their summer encampment, and was very much appreciated. As a tribe they are wealthy, and able and willing to pay for all that is done for them.

As Moslems, plurality of wives is usual, and as lax

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Moslems they sometimes have more than the four permitted by the prophet, though it is considered better form not to exceed this number. A khān has wives of different social status. The chief wife should be a bibi, or daughter of a khān. These marriages are specially valuable in that they tend to unite the various families, and as the women have so much influence not only with their husbands and sons, but with their fathers and brothers, many feuds are prevented. This chief wife has complete control of the estate during her husband's absence, and she is often a woman of superior intelligence and ability. The khāns sign letters and documents and do not use a seal for the purpose as the Persians do, but when they go away they empower their bibi wives to use their seals. The bibis also have their own seals which they use for their personal business transactions.

A khān sometimes takes a wife from an inferior class; she may be the daughter of a petty chief with whom he wants to keep on friendly terms, and from whom in case of need he may exact support. Such a wife claims to be called a bibi, but it depends very much on how she pleases her lord. If she is acceptable she will be treated almost as well as a bibi proper, and may own villages, but she will never have the power and influence of the chief wife.

A third class of wife is again socially inferior. She may be the daughter of a peasant, of the head steward or some other servant, whose fidelity the khān wishes to secure. She may be selected for her beauty, and may have been chosen for him by his mother when she was quite small, and brought up in her future mother-in-law's house. Sometimes the chief wife chooses a new wife for her husband. She says that she understands his likes and dislikes, and she knows whom she will like as

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a fellow-wife better than anyone else, so why should she not choose. I have been told that a bibi can pay you no greater compliment than to ask you to become a fellow-wife.

Divorce is considered a great disgrace and is seldom resorted to, and never by a bibi. Sometimes there will be serious disagreements, and the chief wife will go with her children and servants and valuables to her father's home for perhaps a year, but she may be reconciled and return at any time. Other wives may be divorced if they have no children, or if they are ill, or if the husband dislikes them. Immorality is almost unknown among these people. The men take great care of their women, and the women have a high standard of their own. A chief once suggested that he should bring a French governess from Paris for his wives and daughters. His bibi wife indignantly declined, saying that a woman who would consent to come alone with her (*i.e.* the bibi's) husband from Paris would not be a fit inmate for *her* house.

Though the Bakhtiaris are nominally Moslems, they are very little influenced by this faith. At heart they are fatalists, and many of them are agnostics in their attitude towards life, if not in profession. They say: "The Bible may be true. The Qu'ran may be true, who can tell?" The women seldom pray or read the Qu'ran, but all who can afford it wear a tiny copy of it in a small filigree gold or silver box, sometimes set with precious stones, or ornamented with the husband's photograph; this is strapped round the upper arm and may be worn as an ornament or a charm, according to the outlook of the wearer. In later life religion becomes more attractive to the women, and it is the ambition of every bibi to make the pilgrimage to Mecca. When we realize that

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this is the only journey outside her own country allowed to her, and what the excitement and attraction of it mean to her, we cannot be surprised at her eagerness to become a pilgrim. Many save up for years beforehand, as it means great expense, and probably a year's absence from home. Added to everything else, there is the anticipation of her new title, that of *baji bibi*, on her return from pilgrimage, and of the merit she will acquire.

The graveyards of the Bakhtiaris are like all other Persian burying-places, most dreary and sad-looking. They are usually on high ground which cannot easily be used for cultivation as it is difficult to water, or on the edge of the desert where nothing grows. The graves are marked with roughly hewn stones, some of which bear a brief inscription. Weird-looking stone lions are often placed on the graves of warriors. Many people think that burial in Kerbela or Kum is more honourable and will give them a better chance in the hereafter, so, until an opportunity comes of sending the body in a rough coffin to one of these shrines, it is temporarily placed above the ground in the graveyard, where earth is piled over it to form a large mound.

After the death of a *khān* or *bibi* everyone in the village comes to lament loudly the departed; after which they partake of a sumptuous feast. It is the custom for all the *bibis* within reach to come one at a time and pay visits of condolence after a death in the house of a *khān*. These visits usually last three days, one hour of each day being given up to loud mourning, and the rest to feasting and enjoyment. The visits of these various sympathetic relatives and friends often cover several months, and are great occasions for social intercourse, of which these big ladies in their isolated

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houses have little opportunity, unless a wedding or funeral supplies one.

The dress of Bakhtiari women is very different from that of other Persian women. The poorer women wear chiefly dark blue cotton garments: long and full skirts, a shirt and lined jacket of the same material or of some patterned print, in winter sometimes padded with cotton-wool. These upper garments fall over the skirt almost to the knees. They wear various wrappers round their heads, and over all a scarf of about two yards and a half long, wound round the head and neck and thrown over the shoulder. Many of them wear heavy beads or jewellery. Some wear cotton shoes or *givehs*, but the majority, even on the march, are barefooted. They have an easy, swinging walk in spite of often being obliged to carry children or loads. The bibi's dress is the same in style, but differs very much in material and effect. She wears a sort of head-dress of beads with a fringe of gold coins. The scarf which she wears is of silk, beautifully fringed, and sometimes finished with tassels of gold and pearls. Young girls wear brightly coloured scarves of green, scarlet or crimson; the older women wear a shot silk, the colour of which they call *sayēh-i-kuh*, or the shadow of the mountain. The skirts are very fully kilted, and four skirts each measuring eight yards round is quite usual. Rich women wear a great deal of jewellery, sometimes several hundred pounds' worth of gold coin, which is easily taken off and put into use if necessary. Bracelets, anklets, pearl necklaces, diamond and other rings are all worn. The whole dress is heavy and cumbersome; probably use makes it seem less so, but it looks as though it must handicap its wearer by impeding her movements. Bakhtiari women may always be recognized by the strange way

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in which they wear their hair. It is straight and silky, and made black by art if not by nature. It is parted in the middle, and the front locks are brought down and tied in a knot under the chin. This is far from becoming to the wearer, but it is an old custom. The rest of the hair is worn in numerous plaits down the back, in a manner similar to that of other Persian women. When the upper-class women travel beyond their own territory they wear baggy trousers and a *chādar*, and a sort of shield of black canvas something like the *pêché* worn by the townswomen.

Carpet-making is a great source of wealth to the bibis. They employ women as weavers, and have the looms near their own apartments so that they can superintend the work. They feed the workers, and when a large carpet, which may have taken months to weave, is finished, each weaver gets a present of a few shillings, but no regular wage. All the materials used in carpet-making are produced locally. The making and mixing of the dyes are often secrets possessed by the individual or the family.

A carriage one day drove up to the big gate of the house where the women doctors and nurses lived who were in charge of the women's hospital in Isfahān. Two men were on the box, one of whom came to the house with a letter. This he said was very urgent, and must be given at once to the *khānum hakim* (lady doctor). She was in the city visiting, and the man was told that he must wait. He said they had come very quickly the fifty miles from the castle of a Bakhtiari chief whose principal wife was dying, and the doctor was wanted at once. He said that he had some shopping to do in the *bāzār* and would be back before sunset, when he hoped the *khānum hakim* would be ready to go with him. The doctor came in very tired from her long

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round in the hot, dusty streets, and badly needing a rest. She read the letter, and decided that someone must go at once. Fortunately at that time there were two medical women there; this very seldom happens, but it made it possible for one of them to go. The doctor knew the khān, and this bibi had been to the hospital some time before. She quickly gave directions about her patients in the hospital, and told one of the Armenian nurses to get ready to accompany her. She then went to the dispensary for various medicines which she might need, packed her own bag, and by sunset they were ready to start. The carriage was not bad, and the horses good and strong. The first few miles was easy going over good roads, but the farther they went the rougher and more difficult the roads became. About ten miles out of the city they crossed a fine stone bridge, then through the village of Pul-i-vergun. The road from here goes over a long paved causeway built across a swamp. The coachman said this was dangerous in the dark and that he must wait for daylight. He evidently meant to have a rest for himself and his horses. The doctor was very insistent that they should proceed as she knew the urgency of the case, and at last he agreed to go on about midnight, when the moon would be up. After leaving the swamp and some low-lying ground the road began to rise slowly towards the pass of the Gerdan-i-Rukh, a rocky defile, which is really the entrance to Bakhtiari land. The travelling was heavy and difficult for a carriage, but at last, on the morning of the third day after leaving Isfahān, the castle of the khān was reached. Here all was bustle and confusion; the bibi was still alive, but very ill.

Profuse welcomes were poured out by everyone, and the doctor and nurse were invited to rest and drink tea



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before seeing the patient. "No," the doctor said, "I will see my patient before I do anything else; that is why I have come this long and difficult journey." Under the doctor's clever and loving treatment the invalid quickly improved, and in two or three days was out of danger.

During this time everything possible was done for the comfort of the visitors. They had all their meals sent to their own rooms; tea several times a day, bread and eggs with it in the morning, and English biscuits in the afternoon. For lunch and dinner there were large dishes of *kish-mish-pilau*, *kabobs*, chickens, or venison. Little fruit or vegetables are grown in these highlands, and what fruit they have is chiefly dried fruit brought from the town. The Armenian and other shops in Julfa and Isfahān where English tinned goods are sold are largely patronized by the Bakhtiaris, who will pay exorbitant prices for such things. Tinned foods and ices were also offered to the visitors, and nothing was left undone to show their appreciation of the doctor's skill and kindness.

The khān spoke French fluently, often wore European clothes, and had made several journeys to Europe. On the last day of the visit he came to the doctor and said that he very much wanted her to see his "new wife." "Your new wife, *agha*, I didn't know you had one!" "Yes," he said; "I have taken her lately; she is beautiful, and I want you to see her." A time was arranged, and a servant came to conduct the visitors to a room in another part of the house where they had not been before. Entering the room, they found the khān's sister in command. She was a rather overpowering woman, and was ruling his *anderūn* during his chief wife's illness. Seated on a cushion on a beautiful carpet at one end of the room was the little bride. She looked scared and afraid. She was dressed in bright and

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gay silks and muslins, and was wearing a great deal of jewellery. The usual polite greetings were exchanged, and the doctor tried to overcome the child's shyness—she was only eleven years old—but in vain. Soon the room began to fill with women, one after another stealing in and joining in the conversation. Tea was then brought in and handed to the ladies. Just inside one of the doors a poor, miserable woman was sitting; she looked afraid of being sent out, and kept a watch on the khān's sister. She constantly put her hands to her eyes, which were very sore, and tried to attract the doctor's attention. The doctor asked who she was, and was told: "She is nobody; take no notice of her." "But," she said, "she has very bad eyes, I think I can do something for them." "No," said the chief lady, "you must not take the trouble, she is not worth it." Again the doctor asked: "Who is she? Is she a servant here?" "No, she is not a servant; she gets her bread here, that is all. She is nobody."

The doctor then insisted on looking at her eyes and suggested that she should be sent to the hospital. "Sent to the hospital," said the lady. "Do you think the chief would afford a donkey to send *her* to the hospital! Send us some medicine and we will put it into her eyes." At this moment a servant brought the doctor another glass of tea, and while she was handing it she managed to say: "She is a cast-off wife." Then all the story came out. Two years before this poor woman had been a favourite wife of the chief, not a bibi, but holding a good position as she had three children. Some epidemic came along and in a very short time she was childless. She was so agonized by her loss and wept so constantly that her eyes were very much affected. Nothing was done for them and she soon became almost blind. Then childless,

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heart-broken and well-nigh sightless, she was no longer of any use to her husband, who divorced her. And in her place he had just married the child who sat there looking shy and terrified. Surely some change is needed in a system which can create such conditions as these.

## CHAPTER VI

### TRIBESWOMEN—THE QASHGAIS

THE Qashgais are a rich and powerful tribe occupying territory to the east of the Bakhtiari country and west and north-west of Shiraz. They have about 30,000 tents, with six or seven inmates to each. They are of Turkish extraction.

My dealings with the Qashgais have been, to say the least, alarming at the time, but interesting in retrospect.

We were once journeying *en famille* from England to Isfahān via Bombay, Bushire and Shiraz. Owing to illness we were delayed in Shiraz for some weeks, and so were travelling at a hot and uncomfortable time of year. We left Abadeh in the late afternoon of 31st May and travelled well into the night. At the village where we stopped there was no accommodation, so we had our mattresses put on the floor in the entrance to the caravanserai and had three or four hours' sleep. We were anxious to make an early start the next day so as to get to our stopping-place by noon. As the muleteers were loading up one of them sneezed and the others refused to do anything more. One of our servants came to us and said: "The muleteers don't want to travel to-day." On pressing for the reason we were told of the ill-omened sneeze. We ridiculed the idea, and said that if the men did not load up at once and start they would get no present. As the present from a *Farangi*, or European, at the end of a long journey is generally

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worth having, they very grudgingly began to load up. We intended starting at four A.M., but it was after seven before they were ready. Waiting about in the open desert in the early morning with all your possessions, chairs, books, etc., packed up is not cheerful, especially with a heavy baby and two other small children who do not appreciate being up so early. At last, however, all the loads were on the mules, our two pairs of *kajavehs*, or panniers, ready, and we ourselves thankful to get into them and be off before the heat of the day.

I never knew a caravan travel like that one did; the mules seemed as if they would not, or could not, go faster than a snail's pace. The muleteers grumbled and said they were sure everything would go wrong, they ought not to have started after the sneeze, that sneeze was an indication that bad luck awaited them; and so they talked, while we jogged along and made the best of it. The stage was a long one of about twenty-five miles over a vast plain with a range of mountains away to the west. There was no village or caravanserai or building of any kind, except one watch tower, in the twenty-five miles. Everything looked beautiful in the gorgeous June sunshine, but it was very hot. About midday we came in sight of a tower and sent the servants ahead to prepare some lunch. Either tinned food, or cold meat or fowls cooked the night before, with bread and a cup of tea, is the usual midday lunch on such journeys. As we got near the tower our servants, two of whom were Persians and the other an Armenian, came up to us in great agitation to say that there were some robbers at the tower. We thought they were perhaps making a mistake, and in any case they were very scared, so we told them to hurry up with the lunch and get the samovar boiling. We stopped just before the

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tower and dismounted, and sat down on the rug which had been spread for us on the ground in the shade of the tower. The lunch consisted of sardines, bread and butter and cheese. We were just about to begin when a fine-looking tribesman came up and salaamed. My husband took him on one side and the man said: "We are road-guards; we will take you to the end of your next stage in safety. A present will be necessary." My husband said: "All right, we shall be ready in half-an-hour. I will give you the usual present." This present at that time was two *krans* a man, the buying value of a *kran* being about one shilling, as living was then cheap. As a rule from two to four guards accompany travellers for three or four miles where the road is supposed to be dangerous. If you refuse these guards and happen to be robbed you can make no claim on the Government. So, though generally looked upon as a nuisance, it is always considered wiser to take guards. These gentlemen, however, were rather different from the usual type of road-guards, and their spokesman said: "Well, there are nine of us and we want at least £10 each." My husband expressed surprise, and they all crowded round and said: "We may as well tell you—our name is Hasan. We are robbers, and we want all you have got." He asked them if they were not afraid of being captured, and if they did not owe any allegiance to the Shah.

"No," they said, "we are afraid of no one; the Shah is nothing to us; we have been robbers for generations. Give us your keys and let us see what you have in your boxes." Remonstrance was useless; they were all well armed with rifles and heavy leaded sticks, a blow from one of which would fell a man. They had binoculars, and one of their number was up the tower with a telescope,

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scanning the plain. They had several fine horses, and if any other caravan had been in sight they would probably have taken themselves off. We carried no firearms, and our party consisted of four muleteers, three servants and ourselves, so the only possible thing to say and do was, "In the name of God, help yourselves," and wait to see what attracted them.

While the palaver had been going on, the two Persian servants had come to me and asked me to take care of their money, which I declined to do, as the robbers would most certainly have had it, and I should have been obliged to reimburse the men. Seeing that I was not to be drawn, one ran some distance off and, scratching a hole in the ground, hid the money there; the other tied string round his legs below the knees and dropped his money-bags into his loose trousers.

Meanwhile the Qashgais were busily inspecting our possessions. They first annexed all our tea towels, which they folded cornerwise and put round their faces, tying them over the tops of their hats, and pulling the corners up over their mouths and noses. This was, of course, to try and disguise themselves. They seemed to think a gladstone bag would be full of money, so opened it and took out what money there was, and various other things, such as collar studs and links. They opened our big hold-alls and then demanded the keys of our boxes. While this was going on I got out my kodak and pretended that it was a toy which I was showing to the children, but I really got several snapshots of the robbers. When we hesitated about handing over the keys of the boxes, they said: "Never mind, we shall take you up to our tents in the highlands. We have a key there which will open all your boxes." As there seemed a lull in the proceedings, I told the tableman to bring the samovar, so

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that we might have some tea and set off again. At this the leading man was very angry, and said: "You will be our guests for tea to-day. Mount at once; we are going to take you to our tents." Being alarmed at the man's manner, my little five-year-old daughter began to cry, and said: "If granny could see us now, it would break granny's heart." She had a very lively remembrance of the dear grandmother to whom she had said "Good-bye" a few weeks before, in London. The other children were too young to take any notice of what was going on. The head robber said: "Tell the child we don't want any children, we have plenty of our own. We won't hurt your children. Mount at once and start."

Again remonstrance was useless; we got into our *kajavehs*, and we and our caravan of twenty animals were driven for about four miles across the plain. Two or three of the robbers who had no horses took the servants' mules. One very objectionable man kept riding up to me and pointing to a road over the mountains, and saying: "We are going up that road; you will not be able to ride, it is too steep; we are taking you to our tents, where you will be our guests." I pictured myself being undressed by the women of the tribe and my jewellery, which was in small bags and sewn to my under-garments, being discovered and annexed. My chief feeling during this ride over the plain was not fear, but humiliation. To be driven along by these ruffians, and to be so completely in their power, was a trying experience. At last we got to the foot of the mountains, very hot and weary. We had had no lunch, not even a cup of tea, which seems so essential on these journeys where there is no drinking water for miles, and any that might be carried in water-bottles would be tepid, if not hot. Once across the plain, the chief robber, a fine-looking old man with a very highly



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pitched voice, sat down by a stream to smoke a *kalyān*. The other men gathered round him and a lively discussion ensued. Presently two men were sent over to us to say that if the *sahib* would give them five or six gold watches, or something of similar value, they would let us go. Fortunately, we had no gold watches visible, but instead we offered two oxidized watches, a gold chain bracelet and brooch and a few other things, pointing out their respective values and saying that we had nothing else to offer. They handed them from one to another and finally pocketed them. Then there was a lull and we waited to see what was going to happen. Presently they took stock of all the men in our party and decided that some of them, especially the servants, had much better hats and coats and shoes than they themselves had, so they very quickly exchanged their old things for the better ones of the travellers. Next they cut open all their saddle-bags, which were carefully secured at the tops, by slitting them down the middle with a knife. As the servants had been paid for their down journey, at the coast, they had invested most of their money in goods which they hoped to sell at a good profit in Isfahān. They were saved the trouble of carrying any of these farther north. Next the robbers told the muleteers to load up several of my boxes on the leading pony of the caravan. Tribespeople use horses and donkeys, so if they had taken a mule it would have told against them.

They then told us that they were going away for a time, but that we must stay where we were all night. We protested, and said that we could not spend the night in the open desert. So they relented, and said we must stay at least an hour. One of the mules was carrying a load of Manchester piece-goods which the muleteer was taking for a merchant in Isfahān. At the moment that

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the robbers were going off with our boxes, one of them noticed this load, pointed it out to the others, who, to our great satisfaction, undid the ropes, let our boxes fall to the ground, and loaded the pony up with the prints instead. The robbers then moved off, one in one direction, two in another, and so on, and all the time we were conscious that they were keeping us in sight through their field-glasses and telescope. It was then seven P.M. and beginning to get dusk. We spied a low sheepfold about a hundred yards off and someone went to examine it, when to his surprise he found the three proper road-guards gagged and bound and lying on the floor. It seemed that the Qashgais knew of our movements; they had come the night before and imprisoned these men in the sheepfold, and then waited for us. We liberated them, gave them some tea and sent them back to the nearest telegraph office, more than thirty miles to the south, with a wire to Isfahān to tell them of what had befallen us, and that our arrival would be considerably delayed. We had hoped to get there in another six days.

We all felt terribly limp after our experience, but pulled ourselves together and started to do the remainder of the stage, another ten or twelve miles. Our captors had taken us several miles from the main road, but there was a good moon and the muleteers knew the way. We set off, feeling very grateful that we had not had a worse experience, and, as we learnt afterwards, our robbers were gentlemen compared with many of their profession. When we had gone about three miles we met a big party of mounted men, perhaps thirty of them. Those in front rode up to me—I was riding on ahead—and asked for “a present.” Now, I thought, here we are in for another experience, but I told him to go to the *sahib*, who was

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riding behind. Both caravans stopped, while loud talking took place, then in about ten minutes we all went our several ways. It appeared that they were, according to their own statement, a party of Bakhtiaris searching for a band of robbers. When they heard of what we had been subjected to, they promised to hurry off and run them to earth and get back our property. Subsequent reports told us that they did overtake them, but they sat down by a stream, took the *istikhari*, or omen, and divided our things between them. We rode on to Yezd-i-khast, one of the strangest places in Persia—a village built on an enormous yellow sandstone rock in the middle of a chasm. It is connected with the plain by a drawbridge, and if this is drawn up the village is almost impregnable. We went, not into the village, but to the vast caravanserai, arriving about midnight. A blackened room was swept out, beds put up, and by this time the children were wide awake. Half the village had crowded into the caravanserai to hear what had befallen us. The chief men of the village were busy making a list of all we had lost, and insisted on one of the muleteers setting out at once with some of the villagers in search of the robbers. They said that the governor of the province of Fars would hold them responsible. They also insisted on our waiting several days for the return of these men, but on the fourth day we said we must start. We had no money and no watches. As we came to various stopping-places we were greeted as the people who had fallen into the hands of robbers, and were most kindly treated, and supplied with all we needed. It was delightful to be met a few days later, about twelve miles from Isfahān, by three Englishmen with a carriage and an excellent lunch, and later in the afternoon, about three miles from the city, we found

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nearly forty Europeans waiting to offer their welcome, their sympathy, and a good tea.

About six months later the robbers were good enough to leave at H.B.M. Consulate, Isfahān, the watches, bracelet, brooch, studs, a teapot, my account book and a few articles of clothing which they found unsuitable! Of the money nothing has ever been heard, though it still has a place on a list of claims on the Persian Government!

A year or two later we had another experience with Bakhtiari robbers, but the sequel to the Qashgai robbery will be of greater interest.

Every year numbers of Qashgais come to the Mission Hospital in Isfahān for operations. For a long time, before any of these men were put under the anæsthetic, the doctor used to say to them: "Now confess, did you rob the *kasheesh sahib*?" The answer was always in the negative.

During the war the brother of the head of the tribe came to the hospital for a long course of treatment. He brought about twenty people with him, his own doctor, secretary, mullā, historian, and servants of all kinds. He more than once asked us to lunch, a most elaborate meal being provided; and we from time to time invited him to lunch or tea with us. He was a very tall, handsome man, able to talk about many things, and one day after lunch the conversation turned on travelling in Persia, and on his own people. We told him of our experience. He had two personal servants sitting outside the drawing-room on the verandah. He said: "These men can rob; if you like, I will call them in and ask them if they had anything to do with your robbery." A loud call brought the men to the door and he asked them about it. "Oh yes," they said, "we remember it quite well. It was so-

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and-so who was the leader of that band. We were not with him that day; we had nothing to do with it.” Both chief and men seemed proud of their prowess and of the fact that they could rob, but we were glad that we had not met before.

The brother of our guest, who was the head of the tribe, once entertained two missionaries in his tent. Tea was handed on gold trays. The chief was friendly and communicative. He spoke of his influence with his people, and said how glad he would be to have a doctor and a schoolmaster in his encampment. Could his visitors send some friends? He was told that they would not only bring medicine and school books, but the Gospel as well. He said he understood that and was quite willing. An appeal in England for these men brought no response. The war broke out. This chief broke faith with the British. A political man who knew, in speaking about it said that he felt sure that if the doctor and schoolmaster had been sent this chief would have remained loyal to England!

Some time after, inquiries were made about his sons, and his answer was: “They are learning to shoot and to rob. What else can they do? You were not ready to help us.”

There is some of the finest character in Persia in these tribes men and women, the pity is that it is not being turned to better account.

I have not had much to do with the Qashgai women beyond meeting them *en masse* when they have been changing their camping grounds. In their fine physique and general bearing they are very different from the townswomen. The women in the families of the chiefs have considerable independence and authority. They are of value to their husbands and to the community, and so

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win respect. I knew a daughter of a Qashgai chief who was the wife of a Shirazi. She was pretty and attractive, wore clothes which had some semblance to those of the West, and was not at all what people would expect a woman of a wandering tribe to be, unless they were conversant with some of their manners and customs. To those women who are not of high rank falls all the work of the tent-dwelling and the flocks and herds. The young men of the tribe do little work: when away, they ride and hunt and rob!—and when in the encampment they sit and smoke and give ear to the tellers of tales of romance and valour. The women lead hard and busy lives, but judging from their graceful appearance, their bright eyes and vigorous movements, such lives agree with them. As girls they may possess considerable beauty, but owing to hard work and exposure to the sun they quickly lose it, and become very dark and sunburnt. Their food is simple, chiefly bread and curdled milk or cheese, with an occasional meat meal. Travellers speak of them as hospitable and friendly. They are open and fearless in manner, which is really the result of their sense of security. Most of the marriage customs are akin to those found among the townspeople, though some show traces of pre-Islamic origin. Many very good carpets are made by the Qashgai women, under much the same conditions as in the Bakhtiari tribe.

## CHAPTER VII

### WOMAN'S STATUS

FOR centuries the status of the Eastern woman has been a crying evil; it has seldom, however, been recognized by her as such, but simply accepted as her *kismet*. She is her husband's property and he can treat her as he likes. Man has legislated to his own advantage, and what choice has woman had but to acquiesce? The civilization of a country is to a great extent determined by the position and influence of its women, not by their social position merely, but by their intellectual and spiritual aspirations. It has truly been said that "the cause of woman and the cause of civilization are one." What of a country like Persia, where a woman, except as a mother, is a negligible quantity? The greatest weakness in the social and national life of Persia has been its estimate of woman. The seclusion and swaddling of her life has been a religious command and a political policy; and this wastage of "a nation's greatest asset" has kept Persia in a backwater. How is it that Persian women are in such a tight corner? To whom does the blame attach? How does their position work out in daily life?

To answer the last question first—let us see what is the present-day position of a Persian woman.

In her own words, she is a "*purdah nasheen*," or a sitter behind the curtain. If she leaves her house she

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must be completely hidden from top to toe with her hideous black chādar and thick veil.

If she is at a show of any kind she must still be closely veiled, or else sit behind two or three curtains. She may be able to see through a veil or a curtain, but she must not be seen by any man, except those most closely related to her.

She is betrothed and married as a child without the slightest reference to her own wishes or ideas, in fact without any knowledge, on her part, of the man to whom she is to be married. She may find herself married to an old man, or she may find that she is one of several wives, just a new toy for some wealthy man. Besides fellow-wives, she may find a temporary wife, a concubine or a slave woman sharing her husband's attentions. If she proves intractable, or fails to please her husband in her work and ways, if she loses her good looks, or, most serious offence of all, if she fails to present him with a son, she is threatened with divorce. If for any reason *she* suggests divorce, she will lose her dowry, which is only paid when she is divorced by her husband. There is nothing to prevent a divorced woman from marrying again after a lapse of three months.

A woman's powers and trustworthiness are always at a discount; she is uneducated and uninformed. She is downtrodden, but defiant and imperious, with little idea of self-control. How can men become patriots and leaders with mothers like these? The attempt to improve nature by the banishment of woman from her rightful place in the world has resulted in a mutilated, unbalanced social order, which militates against home life and national development, neither of which is possible under present conditions.

When a man and woman are seen together in the



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streets, the man invariably walks in front, often carrying on a conversation with the woman, who walks behind!

The attitude of the disciples when "they marvelled that He talked with the woman" is readily understood by any observer of customs in Persia.

The Qu'ran sanctions four contemporary wives, who may be cast adrift at any time without explanation or notice. The condition of the concubine is worse. She is at the entire mercy of her master, who, when he tires of her, may sell her to even a worse man, and so she passes on from master to master, a very wreck of womanhood. If children are borne by these women they are legitimate and share in the inheritance, thus giving additional grounds for domestic feuds, and lessening the tone and vigour of the ruling classes. Temporary marriages contracted for a few weeks or "for 99 years" are common.

It is only necessary to know a few Persian women intimately to see how these principles work, and to understand how hard their lot is. Mercifully many of them do not realize this, and even look upon their veils as a protection and privilege. They say that until the minds of the men are cleaner a veil is an absolute necessity for every self-respecting woman. There are many houses of ill-fame in the cities, and such can often be recognized by the sight of an unveiled woman peeping out of the door. The question as to who is to blame will be considered in another chapter. Here it is sufficient to say that women are certainly not entirely free of blame. To a great extent this is the result of their heredity, and more still of their environment, and of their want of education. Only .3 per cent. of Persia's women are literate. They are told that they are weak and stupid—a common name for a woman is *zaifé*, or

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weak one; and a woman will say, "I am a donkey," and often lives up to this reputation.

But how comes it that Persia's women have such an inheritance? It is partly due to ancient custom, but much of it dates from the Arab invasion and the teaching and example of Muhammad.

## CHAPTER VIII

### ISLĀM & WOMEN

**I**T is maintained, and to some extent rightly so, that Islām has been a powerful factor for good, inasmuch as it has given to so many millions of the human race a belief in the true God and a simple system of faith suited to the dwellers in desert lands.

Islām seen at a distance, with its mosques and worshippers, its almsgiving, its fasts and its pilgrimages, is much more picturesque and attractive than when it is seen at home. This is not the place for a discussion of Islām in general, but only for a brief survey of its effect on the bodies and minds and souls of more than half of its adherents, the women and children of Muhammadan lands, and of Persia in particular.

In the preceding chapters much has gone to show how Persian women are handicapped from the beginning to the end of life; now we need to see in detail how much of the handicap is to be attributed to Islām.

The actual meaning of the word Islām is "submission to the will of God." It is the name commonly given by the followers of Muhammad to the faith they profess. It is said in the Qu'ran: "Whoso desireth any other religion than Islām, that religion shall never be accepted from him, and in the next world he shall be among the lost" (Sūrah iii. 79).

Mansour Fahmy in his book, *La condition de la Femme dans la Tradition et l'Evolution de l'Islamisme*, says:

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“Moslem literature in its historical development has degraded the position of women more and more; and consequently has degraded itself.”

In this chapter we shall use the word Islām to include the life and example of their prophet, the teaching of the Qu’ran and of the Traditions, and the general conduct of life resulting from them. The laws of Persia are founded on the Qu’ran; the minutest details of life and conduct are enumerated in the Traditions; Islām has very truly “permeated the life of the Persian.” While men are proud and independent, and believe themselves assured of Paradise by the mere accident of their faith, the lot of women is a very different matter, full of hardship and uncertainty.

Much of the evil which befalls women through Islām is the result of the morals which existed in Arabia when the prophet began his work. He did very much to improve the position of *Arabian* women, but when these amended laws and customs were passed on to the women of Persia, it meant a retrograde step for them, as they had long enjoyed an honourable and influential position.

The following Arabian proverbs give some of the prevailing ideas about women in Muhammad’s day:—

“Women are the whips of Satan.”

“Trust neither a king, a horse, nor a woman.”

“Obedience to a woman will have to be repented of.”

“A man can bear anything but the mention of his wives.”

“What has a woman to do with the councils of a nation?”

Those who know something of the inner workings of life and custom in Moslem lands know how the spirit

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of these proverbs still prevails. Among the Arabs, while angels were called the daughters of God, men did not desire daughters for themselves. To combat this the prophet, in Sūrah xvi., says that "when the birth of a daughter is announced to any one of them, dark shadows settle on his face, and he is sad:

"He hideth him from the people because of the evil tidings: shall he keep it with disgrace or bury it in the dust? Are not their judgments wrong?"

And again, in Sūrah lxxi., we find that on the Day of Judgment "the female child that hath been buried alive shall be asked for what crime she was put to death." Also in Sūrah xvii.: "Kill not your children for fear of want . . . verily the killing them is a great wickedness."

The actual crime may not be committed now, but the spirit which actuated it still remains, and the death of a daughter is looked upon as a blessing.

And so it is with all customs relating to marriage and divorce. In the prophet's day to limit a man to four lawful wives seemed a great improvement on conditions then prevailing; yet it must be remembered that it is not so much polygamy that is the crying evil of the system, but the easy divorce and the permission to take as many concubines as may be desired, and also among the Shiāhs the lawfulness of temporary marriages, or *mutah*, which again was one of the pernicious Arabian customs.

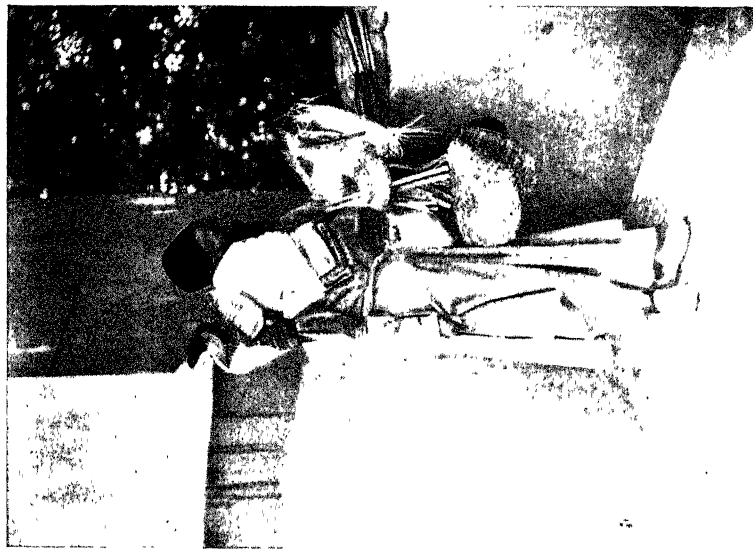
The prophet was very keen on the liberation of slaves, but especially males. He evidently realized that while Islām makes a slave woman as lawful for her master as his own wife, the custom of owning female slaves is likely to continue, as it still does in Persia.

The laws and regulations concerning women are the



A GROUP OF KURDISH GIRLS

The women of the Kurdish tribe do a great deal of manual labour and are hardy and strong. They are orthodox Muhammadans.



A PEDLAR WITH GOODS FOR SALE

This pedlar is standing in the corner of a compound waiting to offer his goods for sale. He has European and Persian piece goods, also baskets,

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most detailed of any in the Qu'ran. It was in connection with women that the prophet was considered to have made his chief reforms; so far as Arabia was concerned, this may have been the case. Among these were: restriction of polygamy, recommendation of monogamy, abolition of incestuous marriages and establishment of prohibited degrees, some limitations to divorce, and rules as to the support, at least for a time, of divorced women and their children. A widow was no longer to be treated as a chattel to be passed on to the man's heir with the rest of his belongings. A divorced woman or a widow was to be at liberty to marry again, and, if of adult age, she was to be permitted to arrange a marriage for herself. All these go to make a list of very real disabilities which Muhammad removed or lessened; the pity is that he lacked both the idea and, perhaps, the courage to go further, and raise woman to her rightful place. On the other hand, the veil and the seclusion of women were not known in Ancient Arabia. The authority for the veil would seem to be a verse in the twenty-fourth Sūrah which says: "Speak to the believing women that they refrain their eyes . . . and that they throw their veils over their bosoms." In addition to the removal of disabilities, he secured certain rights for women under the new laws of Islām, which are to-day the acknowledged laws of Persia.

It is stated in the Qu'ran: "With regard to your children, God commandeth you to give the male the portion of two females . . . and your wives shall have a fourth part of what ye leave, if ye have no issue; but, if ye have issue, then they shall have an eighth part of what ye leave, after paying the bequests ye shall bequeath and debts."

Woman is now an heir-at-law, but only to half the

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value of a man. Where fines are inflicted, a woman pays half as much as a man does. If she is called as a witness, she again only counts as half, except in the case of a birth, where one woman's witness alone may be accepted; in a case of retaliation, her evidence is not accepted, neither may she appear in a law court to give evidence against her husband. The Shiah's allow that she may give evidence in favour of her husband.

The laws governing divorce are legion; the main points of the general teaching on the subject in the Traditions may be gathered from the following:—

“The thing which is lawful, but which is disliked by God, is divorce.”

“Every divorce is lawful except a madman's.”

“The woman who asks her husband to divorce her without a cause, the smell of Paradise is forbidden her.”

And if she brings about the divorce she loses all claim to her dowry.

The ease with which divorce is effected is one of its greatest dangers. From the time of Muhammad onwards, men have taken advantage of the permission granted to them. As an extreme example of this, the prophet's own grandson married and divorced about one hundred women. He is spoken of as “an excessive marrier and divorcer.” No better example could be given of the result of the evil teaching and example of the prophet. Such a code found a ready acceptance among many of his followers. This grandson, Imam Hasan, was declared by the prophet to be “one of the Lords of the youths of Paradise.” A Shah who was reigning at the beginning of the last century had sixty sons, each of whom was being brought up by his mother to believe that one day he would sit on the throne of Persia.



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With examples like these before him, the present-day Moslem has still a free hand, though contact with the West has to a certain extent altered things. Still the old standards are maintained, and though they may not be in common use, the position of the woman suffers. Even if a husband is not at all likely to act as did conspicuous men in bygone days, there is nothing to prevent his doing so.

Sir William Muir says: "The position fixed by Muhammad for woman is that of an inferior creature, destined only for the service of her lord, liable to be cast off without the assignment of any reason, and without the notice of a single hour. While her husband possesses the power of divorce, absolute, unquestioned, no privilege of a corresponding nature has been reserved for the wife. She hangs on, unwilling, neglected, or superseded, the perpetual slave of her lord, if such be his will."

Muhammad in the Qu'ran tells us that "Men are superior to women on account of the qualities with which God hath gifted the one above the other. . . . Virtuous women are obedient, careful during the husband's absence, because God hath of them been careful. But chide those for whose refractoriness you have come to fear; remove them into sleeping chambers apart, and scourge them, but if they are obedient to you then seek not occasion against them; verily God is High, Great!"

And the Traditions say that—

"A bad omen is found in a woman, a house or a horse."

"I have not left any calamity more detrimental to mankind than women."

"The world and all things in it are valuable, but more valuable than all is a virtuous woman."

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It is also stated in the Traditions that the prophet said :

“Admonish your wives with kindness, because women were created from a crooked bone of the side ; therefore if you wish to straighten it, you will break it, and if you let it alone, it will always be crooked.”

Child marriage, though not directed by the Qu’ran or Traditions, is part of the fabric of Islām, and sanctioned by the practice of the prophet in marrying and giving in marriage child wives. It is recorded that Ayesha, one of his wives, stated “when the apostle of God married me I was in my sixth year, and when he consummated the marriage with me I was in my ninth year and was still playing with other little girls. These girls would run away when that prince came near me, being ashamed ; but he would go after them and bring them back to continue our play.” Dr Ludolf Krehl, who showed a decided inclination to take the most favourable view of the prophet’s life and character, said in reference to this and others of his actions : “Muhammad, obviously, was not capable of clearly recognizing and fully estimating woman’s true worth. He, in effect, saw nothing more in woman than a ministering slave ; and this entire view has been adopted into Islām, to its great disadvantage. Amongst the nations professing Islām, the refining element which lies in the intercourse with ladies, and in the influence of educated mothers on the early training of their children, has never been duly recognized, and this is a fatal cancer from which Islām will always suffer.”

It is often said that the teaching of Muhammad is that women have no souls. This idea possibly comes from the ignorance of the women themselves as to the teaching of the Qu’ran. The following passages make the matter clear :—

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“Whoso doeth the things that are right, whether male or female, and he or she be a believer—these shall enter Paradise, nor shall they be wronged the skin of a date” (Sūrah iv.).

“One day thou shalt see the believers, men and women, with their light running before them, and on their right hand. The angel shall say to them: ‘Good tidings for you this day of gardens beneath whose shades the rivers flow, in which ye shall abide for ever.’ This the great bliss” (Sūrah lvii.).

The following quotation seems to have primary reference to the wives of the prophet:—

“Truly the men who resign themselves to God [Moslems] and the women who resign themselves, and the believing men and the believing women, and the devout men and the devout women, and the men of truth and the women of truth, and the patient men and the patient women, and the humble men and the humble women, and the men who give alms and the women who give alms, and the men who fast and the women who fast, and the chaste men and the chaste women, and the men and the women who oft remember God: for them hath God prepared forgiveness and a rich recompense” (Sūrah xxxiii.).

But against these quotations we must put others.

A Muhammadan writer attributes the following to the prophet:—

“When I entered paradise I saw large tents made of pearls and the soil of paradise was musk; and I observed that most of its inhabitants were poor people and *dervishes*; and I also found that most of the inhabitants of hell were women, boasters and oppressors.”

And again the prophet said: “I have seen hell; but I have never seen anything to equal its terrible and awful

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aspect; and most of the inhabitants of hell were women." When his companions asked: "O apostle of God, why are most of the people of hell women?" he answered: "Because they are ungrateful respecting the kindness and rights of their husbands."

There are other passages which are not fit for quotation.

Islām denies education to girls and women, and as a result only three in a thousand of Persia's women can read or write. Persian mullās have a great deal of influence, one reason for this being because the Qu'ran is read in Arabic, and the majority depend on the mullās for its reading and explanation. Another is that property goes through their hands and they can give as much or as little as they like to those who have inherited it. They are largely resorted to for written prayers to be used as talismans or in case of illness. Marriages are sanctioned and performed by them. They are extremely conservative, and all their actions are determined by the Qu'ran and Traditions. In 1919, as the result of an address on Child Marriage given by Dr Emmeline Stuart, at a drawing-room meeting of upper-class women, several of those present agreed to refuse to allow their daughters to marry until they were sixteen or eighteen, and to endeavour to prevent their sons from marrying small girls. A report of the meeting was sent to a leading mullā, who was very much interested, and promised to discuss the matter with some of his younger colleagues. Before long we heard that they had condemned the movement as it infringed the law of Islām. With such a law progress is well-nigh impossible.

Persian women constantly have the name of God on their lips in such expressions as "*B'ism-illah*" ("In the name of God"); it is used as a grace before food, when

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putting on new clothes, and so on. "*Ma-sha-allah*" ("May God not do it") is said when admiring a person or thing, and implies that harm may come, but that this pious expression may avert it. "*In-sha-allah*" ("If God will") is used in reference to anything future. Women are also very much given to strong language; they swear by God or the prophet, Ali or Hosein, or his beard or life, or your life!

When we come to the actual practice of religion, what do we find that Islām gives to women? Those who can read the Qu'ran for themselves are few in number. Mosques are numerous, and here, as we have seen, the women sit behind a screen or curtain. Many mosques exist which women may enter only from a side street and by a back entrance; others they are not allowed to enter at all. According to the Qu'ran, women are not forbidden to go to the mosque, but are told that it is better for them to pray in their own houses. Upper-class women seldom go to a mosque. The majority learn all they know from the public readings which are given in the *bāzārs*, or in private houses, during the sacred months.

The five pillars of Islām are required of women as well as men:

1. The profession of faith: There is one God, and Muhammad is the prophet of God.

2. Daily prayers at the five stated hours. Men may frequently be seen praying in the fields, by the roadside, in their open shops and elsewhere, but not so a woman. The long muslin covering worn by a woman in the house is called a *prayer chādar*, and presupposes that her prayers are said while wearing this in her house, as it is believed that God does not hear the prayers of a woman unless her head is covered.

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I was having tea one afternoon at a Persian house—there were also several native guests—when the call to prayer sounded from the minaret of a neighbouring mosque. Two of these women quietly got up and went to the other side of the room and said their prayers, with all the recognized posturings and genuflexions. While this was going on I suggested that it would be better for me to leave, but this was not allowed. I then said that we ought not to talk lest we should disturb their devotions. My hostess was very decided about it, and said that silence was not at all necessary; and the laughing and talking were persisted in.

3. Almsgiving is incumbent on all Moslems, and consequently street beggars are numerous and most persistent. A large part of the benefit accrues to the giver, the recipient really conferring this on his benefactor. In the Traditions we are told that the upper hand is better than the lower. The mullās are supported by the voluntary and anonymous alms of the faithful. The dervishes who come and establish themselves outside a house and refuse to leave until they get what they consider is their right in the way of food and money, are really a product of the almsgiving of Islām. Some women comfort themselves with the thought of the merit which they are storing up by these benefactions. Many are really kind-hearted and glad to help those who are in need.

4. The fasting month of Ramazan is observed by all women in health, though many are said not to keep the fast very strictly; but unless this is discovered by anyone else, it matters little. While a boy need not begin to fast until he is fifteen, a girl must begin when she is twelve years old.

It is wonderful what an attractive thing the fast

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appears to be to children, and when they are first attempting it, perhaps for half the day only, they are very proud to tell others about it.

5. Pilgrimage. This offers many attractions to women, the chief of which are the merit and honour and title which will be theirs when it is accomplished, and the excitement of the journey. Pilgrimage is the only thing which makes a journey outside Persia possible to the majority of women. Mecca, however, is not the only place of pilgrimage, for Persians may go to Kerbela or Meshed; many also, especially women, go to Kum. Here there is a special shrine to which women go in the hope of becoming mothers of sons.

Wealthy women travel with several attendants, and in a manner befitting their rank. Pilgrimage is to most people a very costly thing, and women often save up for it for years. Poorer women may go as servants, or in the place of some rich woman who has neither the strength nor the inclination to go, but wishes for the merit of the undertaking. A man will sometimes marry a woman who is a Sayyid, and send her on a pilgrimage, so that he may have the merit of it. He will divorce her on her return.

Some women beg their way to one of the sacred cities. This means doing the journey, of perhaps hundreds of miles, on foot, and getting food or money from other travellers on the road. Special merit is gained by those who give to such pilgrims.

Islām only asks of its followers that they should believe and do these five things, thereby showing that they are of the faithful, and so can be sure of Paradise. It is not a matter of purity of heart or life, of avoiding sin or of obtaining forgiveness for it, but of escaping the fate of the infidel: "For the infidels we have

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got already, chains and collars and flaming fire.” The veil, seclusion, ignorance, and all that results from these, are the heritage of womanhood, from Islām. But what does it give her of joy or happiness or security in this life, or of a sure and certain hope of the life to come?



## CHAPTER IX

### HUSBANDS

**A**S so much is being said about wives, it seems only right that something should also be said about husbands, and that term practically includes every Muhammadan man in Persia. Bachelors are not found in Moslem lands, marriage is enjoined by their faith, and the prophet often condemned celibacy. In the Traditions he is reported to have said: "When the servant of God marries he perfects half of his religion." Consequently all, including mullās and dervishes, take to themselves wives.

In a Moslem land religion and sex are paramount. In everything religious or social man is foremost, and woman takes a lower platform, midway between man and beast. A Persian is proud of his country and its past greatness, of his religion, of his sons, and of himself.

About three per cent. of men and boys are literate, but education in the towns is going ahead, and before long things will improve. A Persian loves his exquisite national poetry, even the man in the street will quote poetry. Omar Khayyām is not popular as a poet, but Hāfiz, Sādi and Jalal-u-dīn are classics and more than popular. Many Persian poets have been Sūfis, and this mystic trend makes a great appeal to the Persian.

The Persians are Caucasians and one of the few white races of Asia. The men are good-looking, with dark hair and eyes, and aquiline features. A man is admired

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who has heavy eyebrows, slightly curved nose and a high forehead. Their dress is artistic; they are courteous and pleasant, and love a joke, and are quick at repartee. There are some upright, good men among them, but with the majority truth is at a discount, and a lie is a cleverer thing. They are thrifty, cautious, and industrious when they are not lazy. Among the more primitive people of the villages there are some finely set-up men, sons of the desert and of the soil, men who spend most of their lives in the open air as muleteers or farmers. Simple and kindly some of them are, in spite of their rough exterior. The men of the towns are quick and clever and keen on money-making, if not avaricious. Many are charitable and anxious for the progress of their country. Some are generous, but with the secret hope of favours to come.

They are great lovers of hunting and of horses, though now carriages and motor cars are much in evidence in the towns, and you can always trust a Persian to do what is easiest for himself. The Qu'ran says that God desires to make things easy for men. This idea, coupled with the fact that Islām does not allow the exercise of individual judgment, accounts to some degree for their lack of leaders. Leadership means effort and self-sacrifice, opinions, ideals, and the power to attempt to attain them. A Persian dislikes a strenuous life, his own importance is more to him than that; he is content with what he has, and few aspirations trouble him. All Muhammadan lands suffer from want of leaders. The chief idea in filling a post of importance is to give it to someone who wants the emoluments that such a post offers, not to the man who will be most suitable for the post. Persians show little gratitude for what others do for them, because they think that any kindness is a greater benefit to the giver

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than to the receiver. It is a *savāb*—that is, an action by which the doer stores up merit. The typical Persian can scarcely be called a patriot, he knows too little of the world rightly to appraise patriotism, but he is proud of his country, and a lover of his native place, or *vilāyat*, a word which in the mouth of Tommy Atkins has become “blighty.” He delights in stories of ancient Persia, of its kings and warriors. Now the country depends chiefly for its fighting men on the tribesmen: this has come about not from lack of a fighting spirit, but again because of the lack of leaders and of the slack methods prevailing in the army. Persian men vary considerably in size, but at one time there were only three sizes of uniform made; the wearers of these were often in rags, their wages in arrears, and there was nothing to make their job worth while. Under British and Russian officers they did some good work during the war, but then they were fed and clothed, paid and led.

The religion of Islām gives a great deal to men, both of position and satisfaction, in this world and the next. The whole of life from birth to death is ruled by this faith, the laws of Persia are founded upon it, and to be a believer in this life is to enjoy paradise hereafter.

The Qu’ran is regarded as peerless in style and language and authority, and miraculous in origin. It is said to be God’s final revelation, and that since its appearance the Bible has been abrogated. Certainly from the Arab literary standpoint the Qu’ran is remarkable, and many passages are charming when read in the original. Its greatest truths are the belief in one God and in prayer. But, on the other hand, it is full of superstitions, of historical inaccuracies, and of fables. It keeps the question of sin in the background and suggests no doctrine of redemption. In this the sacred books of

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ancient Egypt, India and China are superior to it. But, apart from this, the rules and laws of the Qu'ran deal with every detail of life and conduct, and have degraded life by perpetuating slavery, polygamy, divorce, religious intolerance, and the seclusion and degradation of women. The Qu'ran, however, is not the only source of Moslem teaching; the fountain-head is really the prophet himself, what he said and did. Muhammad's table talk, manners, dress, down to the most intimate and insignificant details of his daily life, are all portrayed in the Traditions, and are the warp and woof of life and faith to a Moslem. The prophet might be said to be more real to them than God Himself, whom they rather regard as an absentee landowner, or as one who wound the clock of the universe and then left it to carry on. Beyond their belief in God's absolute sovereignty and ruthless omnipotence, most of their ideas of Him are negative. There is no idea of Fatherhood or love. They know about Him, but they do not know Him.

Moslems are divided into two sects: the Sunnis, who are considered orthodox, and the Shiah, who call themselves the followers of Ali, and who are looked upon by the Shiah as schismatics. All Persians, excepting the Kurds and a few others, are Shiah. They take as their leaders the lineal descendents of the prophet, and are devoted to Ali, who married his only surviving child, Fatimeh, and their sons Hasan and Hosein, and the descendants of the latter. These they call Imams, while the Sunnis call their leaders the Caliphs.

Many of the Shiah, in their veneration of Imam Hosein and his vicarious death, have gone a long way towards the central truth of Christianity, and very far away from the orthodox faith of Islām. Those who are Sufis are eager in their search after God.

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Persians have always shown an independence in intellectual and spiritual matters. They have been regarded as "the mind of Islām," and the Right Honourable Amir Ali says that "the whole culture of Mussalman India . . . has been derived from Persia."

Religion and life are inseparable for most Moslems, and one must ask, How does this faith actuate those to whom it means so much? Our subject is "husbands" rather than men, and we want to see how they acquit themselves in their family and social relationships.

As a rule a Persian man is a good son and a good father, but far less often could it be said that he is a good husband, and it is here that he fails, and the result more than anything else is the worm at the root of Islām. With plurality of wives, who are merely chattels, with easy divorce and child marriage, how can home life exist? It is impossible for a husband and wife to be companions; certainly no degree of friendliness can exist between unrelated men and women. Man's world and woman's world are far apart, and yet in reality this is impossible. But every exterior safeguard is used to make them appear disconnected. Neither husband nor wife can ever know one another's friends. There is no co-operation whatever in public work or enterprise. The Moslem world is to all intents and purposes a man's world, and the man is recommended to do exactly contrary to whatever his wife may advise him. She is looked upon as a necessary evil. She is not to be asked after or spoken of by name. Inquiries will be made about a man's "house," meaning his wife and children; she will be spoken of as so-and-so's wife, or such a one's mother, never by her own name. She is her husband's absolute property, and he can do what he likes with her. I heard once of the death of two fellow-wives on the same day.

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I expressed astonishment, and asked what the illness had been, and was told that they had not been ill, someone had put an end to them. Now I expressed horror, and was calmly told: "It is our custom; they were his own, and he could do what he liked with them. Of course he did not kill them himself; someone else did it for him."

The late Kasim Amin Bey of Cairo lifted the curtain and showed something of the prevailing conditions. Unfortunately his book, *The New Woman*, written in Arabic, has been translated only into Russian, and so is not available for all who might profit by it. The following extract is significant:—

"She is the object of his sensual pleasures, a toy as it were with which he plays, whenever and however he pleases. Knowledge is his, ignorance is hers. The firmament and light are his, darkness and the dungeon are hers. His it is to command, hers is blindly to obey. He is everything that is, and she is an insignificant part of that everything."

Sometimes a man may not have the courage or the cash to enable him to divorce his wife, so he resorts to other means. A couple whom I knew had for a long time been living under very difficult conditions, and one day the husband came and told me that they were going to another town, about two hundred miles away, where he thought there would be some chance for his wife to earn some money as well as himself; they had no children and he was in service, and I failed to see the need for it. However, she also came and told me her story of his unkindness and meanness, his visits to other houses, and much that was sordid, and said that he insisted on her starting almost at once. He had sold a good many of their household possessions to pay the expenses of the journey, and had arranged for her to ride a

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donkey attached to a small caravan starting the next day. He was going to follow her soon and do his part, and he was sure that they would make their fortunes. His idea was that he should cook food, which he would afterwards take to the bāzār and sell, while she was to make men's shirts and sit at the side of the bāzār and sell them. So, much against her will, she set off in the early morning, he riding out with her for the first few miles. He said "Good-bye" and promised to follow her soon. He rode straight back to the city, went to the bāzār and bought tea and lump sugar and sweets in large quantities, then rode out to his house to make preparations for his wedding feast that same night. He was a man well over sixty, and the bride was a dancing woman who evidently possessed money and other attractions. The neighbours from their roofs and adjoining compounds saw and heard much of the festivities.

A few weeks after it was reported that he had sold up the remainder of his possessions and set off for Teheran with two other women. Two days later his original wife turned up; she had waited in vain for him in the sacred city of Kum. She had sewed at night, and sat in the bāzār day after day, until in despair, having sold only one garment, she had persuaded a muleteer to bring her back by telling him that her husband would pay when they arrived. Instead, what did she find? Husband gone, house empty and deserted.

Some years ago a child wife failed to please her husband. After repeated punishments he one day came into the room where she was, fastened the door, took a bottle of paraffin from a shelf and, holding the child, poured it over her, struck a match, set her clothing

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alight and went out, locking the door. Her screams soon brought the neighbours around, and after some delay they forced an entrance and found the poor girl in flames. They dragged her out and put her into a stream to extinguish the flames. The burns were terrible, and the shock added to her sufferings. They then applied some of their native remedies. For days the child suffered agonies, until someone suggested that it might be worth while to take her to the English "medicine house" about forty miles away. The patient was put into a huge shallow basket in which there was a wadded quilt, and then was placed on the back of a jolting donkey, someone holding the basket so that it should not fall off. At last, after three days' journey, they reached the mission hospital, where all that was possible was done for the poor little sufferer during the few days that she lingered. The husband had got rid of his wife at the cost of a bottle of oil, and as to caring what people said, why should he? His wife was his own, he could treat her as he liked.

A woman once came to a mission hospital and asked for treatment for her eyes. As the doctor looked at them she kept asking: "Will they be better in a month?" The doctor asked her why she was so anxious to know. "This is how it is," she said. "My husband has given me a month to get better in and if I am not able to see he will take another wife. I am no use to him as I am."

I was in an *anderūn* one day and among the other guests were two girls, both of them under twenty, who were fellow-wives. I had met one of them before, when she was the wife of a rich man. He died away from home, and she had some difficulty in getting her share of his property. A few months passed and she married



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again. She was grandly dressed, and wearing a quantity of handsome jewellery. Among other things, she had a bracelet made of English sovereigns. The other girl was poorly and meanly dressed; she had a sweet face and looked very sad. They were inclined to talk, and they told me how quickly their husband tired of his wives, and the likelihood was that the sad-looking girl, who had no children, would be divorced, my old friend taking her place.

The custom of child marriage owes a great deal to the men. In it they are copying the example of their prophet, and they are pleasing themselves. The disaster to the child is nothing. If she dies, another can easily be procured. Plurality of wives is again following in Muhammad's steps. His first wife had great influence for good over him, but after her death he claimed the right to marry one and another, until at his death he left ten widows to mourn him. For his followers he said that four contemporary wives must suffice. To-day few Persian men avail themselves of this privilege. This is partly because the tenets of the Shiah allow temporary marriages. This is an evil with far-reaching results.

It must not be thought that there are no good husbands in Persia, for such there certainly are, but the general trend of life is to magnify man and to belittle woman. Sometimes in a big house the husband pays all accounts and wages and generally controls the servants and the household, though this is usually left to the wife. A working man, *when* he provides for his family, does most of the shopping. In many cases a wife may not leave the house without her husband's consent. In Bahā'ī households the relations between husbands and wives are very different, this new cult

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believing in the equality of the sexes. The whole family live together, and receive their friends together, and the atmosphere is very different from that of a Muhammadan house. Better still are the conditions in the Christian homes which are now found in many parts of Persia.

## CHAPTER X

### FELLOW - WIVES

**P**OLYGAMY as practised by the prophet and as prescribed for his followers is still part of the social problem in Persia, as in other Moslem lands. In Arabia polygamy had been carried to great excess, and Muhammad put a limit on it for others, though not for himself, as may be seen from the following quotations.

In the fourth Sūrah we read: "Of women who seem good in your eyes, marry two, or three, or four; and if ye fear that ye shall not act equitably, then only one; or the slaves whom ye have acquired."

In the thirty-fourth Sūrah we read: "No blame attacheth to the prophet where God hath given him permission. . . . O Prophet! we allow thee thy wives whom thou hast dowered, and the slaves whom thy right hand possesseth out of the booty which God hath granted thee, and the daughters of thy uncle, and of thy paternal and maternal aunts who fled with thee to Medina, and any believing woman who hath given herself up to the prophet, if the prophet desired to wed her—a privilege for thee above the rest of the faithful."

Almost unlimited licence is given to concubinage, provided the woman be a slave: this is founded upon the example of Muhammad. Amongst the Persian Shiahs the temporary marriage called *mutab* exhibits the worst form of this evil. They claim that it is

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sanctioned not only by the Traditions, but also by the Qu'ran, in Sūrah iv., verse 28. These legalized conditions have long prevailed in Persia, and have always proved a source of suffering to the women and of handicap to the race.

At the present time the infant mortality in the East is terrible, and especially among baby boys, who often seem to be killed by all the extra care and thought and anxiety with which they are surrounded. For those who grow up there are many more risks than for the women, who lead such secluded lives. Though Persian men look as a rule strong and healthy, they have not the staying power that the women possess. During a severe famine in 1918 this was specially noticeable, and many of the women seemed able to hold on much longer than the men. From these and other causes it is evident that the adult female population must be in excess of the male; therefore if husbands are to go round, and every woman, with the fewest possible exceptions, marries, plurality of wives is a necessity. Marriage, too, in almost every case is the only calling open to women.

Added to this necessity there is the attitude of the men, many of whom can never be content with one wife, others who have wives in different parts of the country where business may take them, and those who quickly tire of one wife, whom they may not wish to divorce, but whom they supersede by a younger or more beautiful woman.

Speaking of the custom nearly one hundred years ago, Aga Meer, in Malcolm's *Sketches of Persia*, says:

"After all, the number who take advantage of the licence to have a plurality of wives is not so great as you imagine. . . . Who can afford it? The expense of a marriage, the

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maintenance of females, and above all the dower which is required, and which, remaining at the lady's sole disposal, is independent of that inheritance to which she and her children are entitled from the remainder of the husband's property, are inseparable objections. . . . We may, it is true, escape from one wife by marrying another; but if we are not rich, such a proceeding involves the giving up most of our comforts in life. What I have said applies to men of moderate means; and as to the great mass of the population who live by their labour, few can support two wives."

Judging from the conditions ruling where there is more than one wife, it is a blessing that it cannot more frequently be the custom. It is not, however, only the legal wives, those who are rightly called "fellow-wives," who cause trouble and create jealousy, but all the other women, whose relationship is also legalized by Islām, who share the husband's interest and embitter the lot of the lawful wife.

Though it is generally understood that one wife is now considered the correct thing, I have been told that there are few households where, unless forbidden by expense, there is only one wife, lawful or otherwise.

One wife is sure to be a greater favourite with her husband than another, and this causes endless jealousy and heart-burnings. One may have children and another be childless; again there will be jealousy, and often hatred.

Various *talismans* are resorted to with the hope of regaining the husband's favour, or of becoming the mother of a son. Generally these efforts have something in them of the nature of bringing evil to a fellow-wife, while bringing favour to herself.

If a man has several wives and marries a woman of

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royal birth, neither he nor she will have anything more to do with his other wives. The husband, of course, must make some provision for them, but his new wife ignores them, and wishes him to do the same.

With the Bakhtiaris, a chief wife often selects an inferior wife for her husband, choosing one with whom she can get on well, or who will be useful to her and, if possible, not too attractive to the husband.

Sometimes slow poisoning is resorted to by a jealous fellow-wife. I have heard of cases where slow paralysis has been brought on by this means.

A middle-aged man will often add a pretty child wife, or an educated girl with a modern outlook, to his *anderūn*, where she will live in fear of her fellow wife or wives, who will very much resent her presence. The more fuss the husband may make of the bride, the fiercer will their jealousy burn against her.

I have known cases of fellow-wives who have at least appeared friendly to each other; in such cases each has had some special advantage. One has been the chief wife with grown-up sons, and her position is assured; another may be young, and also have one or two boys, which establishes her position in the house. And, of course, there are sweet and sensible women in Persia as elsewhere. They look upon marriage too as their *kismet*, and accept what comes much more philosophically than Englishwomen, at their present stage of development, would be likely to do. Sometimes a wife even welcomes a new wife, as it will mean more liberty and independence for herself.

I believe the worst conditions often prevail in some of the royal *anderūns*. There are many princes in Persia, and though numbers of them are now only taking one wife, this is not always the case. A friend who was

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governess to several girls, between the ages of twelve and fourteen, in one big *anderūn*, where the many wives of the father of these girls lived, told me that the social atmosphere was more like that of a cat-house than a home. These big ladies all had their separate apartments, but spent a good deal of time together. Most of the quarrels and polite remarks were in connection with their children, the posts they were to occupy, the marriages they were to make, and so on. The restricted liberty of these women in no way affects their tongues, and when eating, sleeping and talking fill the greater part of a life, the little member may do much execution.

At the first Persian luncheon-party I was invited to, I sat next to a lady who had been a wife of the reigning Shah for *one* day. It was extraordinary what importance she had assumed in consequence. When I met her she was the wife of a big Persian, but only an ordinary man, yet from her one day's eminence she was looked upon by her fellow-wives with the greatest respect, and so secured to herself pre-eminence in her civilian household.

In many cases, if a man wants to marry another wife, she may insist on his first divorcing his other wife. Probably not more than one Persian man in twenty has more than one legal wife at a time, but the temporary wives, and concubines, of whom he may have "as many as his soul desireth," are the crux of the matter, and add very much to the difficulties and sufferings of a man's lawful wife. These women also suffer, and the more one goes into the subject the worse it appears.

Sometimes a wife will assert herself like one I heard of some time ago in Isfahān. She was then twenty-four years old, had had four husbands and seven children, and

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boasted that she did not allow her present husband to see his other three wives. Her feeling against these fellow-wives was so strong that she had insisted on their banishment from all the best rooms in the house, and had succeeded in persuading the husband to reduce all their dowries, her own of course excepted. There was not much love lost in this *anderūn*.



## CHAPTER XI

### CHILDHOOD

PERSIAN children are desired and loved, but seldom trained or educated. As small babies they are generally healthy and attractive, but in many cases, owing sometimes to heredity, but more often to the lack of care and knowledge shown in their upbringing, by the time they are nine months or a year old they are weak and sickly.

Definite statistics cannot be had in a country like Persia, but one authority says that in one district eighty-five per cent. of the children die before they are two years old, another that not more than one child in ten lives to grow up. These may be extreme cases, but, from what data there are, it is difficult to believe that more than from thirty to fifty per cent. live to grow up. This is largely due to superstition, ignorance and fatalism, not to want of love.

To many Persians, boys are the only children that count, and anything that is to be admired in child life centres round a boy. It is said that "He who has no son has no light in his eyes." A reported saying of Muhammad is: "Your sons are the perfume of your life for seven years, then for seven years they are your servants; after that they will turn into your enemies or your friends for ever."

The preparations for a baby boy are wonderful and elaborate, but if the arrival turns out to be a girl the

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beautiful hammock cradle may be replaced by an inferior one, the baby will not be weighed and the corresponding weight of sweets distributed to relatives and friends; there will be no music, no dancing boys, no excitement. Sometimes the rumour that the baby is a boy may be started, so as to save the face of the parents, then, when the truth comes out, a few days later, there is less notice taken of it. The wife of a high Russian official presented him with twin girls and the rumour was current in the town that the Consul-i-Russe had a son and congratulations poured in. After about a week the Persian servants who had circulated the report said yes, it had been a mistake, the *sahib* had two daughters and not a son, more's the pity.

A boy is sometimes dressed as a girl so that there may be less risk of harm coming to him through jealousy or the evil eye.

All the Persian babies are swaddled. The tiny garments are carefully made, but more uncomfortable clothing for the poor little wearer it would be difficult to imagine. Tight-fitting shirts and coats, a large sort of bib, all made of dark stiff prints, or, if the parents are rich, of silk or velvet, red, green, blue or purple; a gay little cap of silk or velvet trimmed with gold or silver gimp, then two large triangular bandages, white with black feather stitching or embroidery, keep the cap and the head together! All these things on, the poor baby is put to lie on a large square of print; one corner of this is turned in, and is placed just below the shoulders. The little arms and legs are then pulled down straight, and another corner of the wrapper is turned up over the feet, and the rest is tightly wound round the body, the finished bundle being tied up with braid or tape or even a strap. The binding is so tight that a week-old

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baby may be put to stand against a wall. If the poor wee mites were loosed from their swaddling bands sometimes and allowed a bath and a kick, it might not be so serious. But after the first bath a Persian baby waits a long time for another. A baby is never bathed at home, but always taken to the public bath. Our customs of frequent baths and loose limbs are considered most dangerous. The baby will get cold and fever if it is undressed, and its limbs are sure to be broken if they are not tightly bound up. It is more than likely these things would happen with the child mothers and the general lack of carefulness about a baby. A baby may be put down anywhere, but it ought not to be left in a room alone for the first forty days. At a Christmas entertainment for Persian women we did some shadow pictures, all of which gave great delight, but one which specially appealed to them was as follows:—An old woman was sweeping out a room; a young woman came in in great excitement asking for her *bachah* (baby). The old woman knew nothing about it, but said that she had swept out a *bukchah* (bundle) which had been lying on the ground. The young woman was furious, and after abusing the old sweeper for her carelessness, went out to look for her *bachah*.

From its earliest days a Persian baby is given small doses of soothing medicine, often opium. Thousands of babies are sent to sleep by a few whiffs of opium blown into their faces, or by sucking the mother's finger, under the nail of which is a tiny scrap of opium. This is to save trouble, and in this it is often most effectual; an overdose is administered and the already feeble hold of life gives way. After a baby is a week old it usually has some tea every day, tea without milk, but made very sweet, often with sugar-candy, which is considered to be

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nourishing. When the baby is older, bread, cucumbers and carrots are freely given to it. Sugar tied in a bit of muslin, not always clean, is the ordinary Persian "comforter." Instead of a rattle a baby plays with its mother's or nurse's fingers and finds them most interesting.

Among the things which greatly matter are the charms worn by children. A popular one is the dried eye of a sheep killed at Mecca on the Day of Sacrifice; this may have a turquoise, or a blue bead, set in it. Blue beads and shells are supposed to be potent in averting the evil eye from the child to themselves. If a bead or shell is cracked it is at once attributed to the evil eye, and the wearer is congratulated on escaping the harm which might otherwise have befallen him. Children wear numbers of charms on their caps, or on a chain round their necks. There is generally one like a tubular silver needle-case, or like a little leather packet; each of these would contain pieces of paper inscribed with verses from the Qu'ran. The Qu'ran is the most sacred and valuable thing known to a Muhammadan. Copies printed in Arabic about two inches across, and six-sided, and most difficult to decipher, are divided into two portions, and each one is sewn up in a leather case to which cords and tassels are attached, and worn round the upper arm. I have seen babies of rich people with smaller copies still, fitted into tiny gold or silver boxes which are fastened on the upper arm. Wearing a whole Qu'ran—or portions of it—is looked upon as a great protection.

Sometimes a small boy will be seen with a strip of calico sewn down the back of his coat, or on the top of his tall felt hat. This is to show that he is specially precious, and the hieroglyphics on the calico are prayers for his preservation. A tiny cloth camel, "Abraham's camel," is sometimes sewn on the top of a cap.

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Such protections are thought more valuable and necessary than common sense, care, good food, cleanliness and suitable clothing. But added to these superstitions are others which alarm and terrify children, particularly as they grow older. They are constantly told of evil spirits and harmful things which may attack them at any time. One of the first prayers taught a Muhammadan child is for protection from evil spirits.

Fatalism, too, is responsible for much in the bringing up of Persian children. In cases of infectious illness, such as small-pox, or whooping cough, there is not the slightest idea of isolation. If a child is to have it, he will have it; it is *kismet*, and nothing that you can do will make any difference. If the child is to live it will get better; if it is to die, what is the use of doing anything to try to prevent it? What difference will it make? Fatalism is a terrible creed by which to let one's life be ruled.

But bad as superstition and fatalism are in their effect on the child, the principal cause of its failure to make good is the appalling ignorance which prevails about the most ordinary things of daily life, both moral and physical. There is gross ignorance about the elementary facts of hygiene, and the foolish treatment of illness or accidents causes an immense amount of needless suffering.

When a child is about two and no longer fed by its mother, it has a terrible struggle to pull through. Milk is not given, and most children of this age seem to subsist on dry bread and stewed tea. Many of them give up the struggle. There are no stated meal-times, and there is no regular hour for going to bed for them. The poor little things hang around while their elders eat and chatter and disregard them, until, utterly worn out, they fall asleep anywhere. There is not the slightest attempt at training

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them in anything. Persian children very truly bring themselves up. There are references in Muhammadan literature to the training and instruction of children, but in almost every case it is the boy who was in the mind of the writer. Little thought was ever given to girls; their portion is to be marriage, and all that that involves, as soon as they leave childhood behind.

Their prophet said about girls: "Do not let them frequent the roofs . . . teach them spinning and the chapter of the Qu'ran called 'Light.'"

In the Qu'ran there are few references to children; the chief ones may be summed up as follows:—

Strong disapproval is expressed of the custom of putting new-born baby girls to death, a custom which existed before Muhammad's day. Children are not to be killed for fear of want, and the killing of them is a great wickedness. Their mothers must not wean them until after they are two years old. But while children are said to be a blessing from God, they are also said to be a snare and a temptation, and even "among your wives and your children are foes of yours, so beware of them." The boy is to receive double the portion of the girl. Mothers need not veil before their own children.

There is one passage which gives a true and helpful message for children which is worth quoting in full. It is found in Sūrah lxvii., called the "Night Journey":

"The Lord hath ordained . . . kindness to your parents, whether one or both of them attain to old age with thee; and say not to them 'Fie!' neither reproach them; but speak to them both with respectful speech; and defer humbly to them out of tenderness; and say, 'Lord, have compassion on them both, even as they reared me when I was little.'"

The Qu'ran is not a book for children, even if it were



CARPET WEAVERS' TENT NEAR KIRMAN.

These people belong to the Alishari tribe. Notice the carpets which are thrown over some thorns in front of the tent.

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taught to them, or if they could read and understand it. It is certainly considered the lesson book *par excellence* for the Moslem child, but if he learns to read it, it is only in Arabic, a language which he does not understand. The chief thing a Moslem child is taught about religion is that all outside the pale of his own creed are *kāfirs*, or infidels, and that Moslems only are the favoured of God.

Religion holds very little for the child; of a boy it is said: "The Moslem boy shall have the Aqiqah [sacrifice of two sheep, and shaving of the child's head] on the seventh day. When he reaches six he is old enough to be punished; when he reaches nine he is to sleep by himself, and when he becomes thirteen he is to be driven by blows to prayer, if he refuses." A girl is supposed to begin to pray at nine years old.

Some pray because they think it will please God, and very rarely one hears of a Moslem child who thinks that God loves him or her. Generally it is the set form which must be followed, the repetition of the same Arabic words and the same postures, and unless the child thinks the performance adds to his importance, he will quickly become bored by it.

There is no literature for Persian children beyond the Qu'ran, *The Shah Namée of Jalal-u-din*, *The Arabian Nights* (unexpurgated), *The Rose Garden of Sādi*, *Stories of the Prophets*, a zoological lexicon and a few others. Some have good morals for those who can read them, but many of the stories and incidents in these books are untranslatable. Even the lesson books contain much that a child need not, and ought not, to know. A flabby moral nature is the inheritance of most Moslem children, and nothing is done to imbue it with life, vigour, or purity. Moral maxims alone cannot counteract the terrible effects of heredity and environment. They have



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neither opportunity for education nor leisure for play. A few games, such as leap-frog, or a kind of rounders, are played at the time of the New Year festival. Wood models of *kajāvehs*, or clay models of men and beasts and birds are made, but they are short-lived. Many girls play with dolls, home-made rag ones, which are sometimes most realistic, even to finger-nails. One girl I knew, who had a very unhappy childhood, took every opportunity of escaping from the *anderūn* and running away to a disused room at the other side of the compound, where she had a number of dolls. These she dressed, to the best of her ability, in European style. With the aid of some boxes and the *tākchahs*, or shelves, in the room, she made a dolls' house, with its men's and women's apartments, and made her dolls act many a scene for her. Sometimes a younger sister or friend would join her, and they played at weddings, theatrical performances, public speaking, concerts—the music being produced by combs covered with paper—odd and even, guessing games, and so on. She was very fond of chess, and sometimes when her father was in a good mood he would play with her. She was, however, always afraid to ask him, so used to creep into his room and shake the box containing the chessmen. These, to her, represented a king, a statesman, an elephant, a bird, a horse and a foot soldier. This child was exceptionally bright and precocious, and later on in life graduated at an American school. Still her case shows that Persian girls have something in them; it is sad that it is so often this *something* that is crushed out of them.

In a well-to-do home when a boy is eight or nine he leaves the *anderūn* and is put under the charge of a *lallah*, or tutor, who discourages high spirits of any kind, and teaches him that it is not dignified to run and jump.

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The boy will probably be a good deal in the company of servants, but he will be made much of, and dressed exactly like his father, of whom he will stand in awe and try to imitate in manners and speech. If he is naughty he will be *bastinadoed*, or will "eat sticks." This punishment is meted out to men and boys of all ages and ranks. The culprit lies on the ground and his feet are tied to a post, with the soles uppermost. They are then beaten with canes, sometimes by one man, but often by several, the blows falling thick and fast, until it is almost impossible for him to walk. Generally, however, the mistake with Persian boys is that they have far too much of their own way and are very quickly spoiled. But far worse than this spoiling is the atmosphere by which they are surrounded from boyhood. It is hardly conceivable that children can grow up pure-minded in a Moslem environment; they so quickly learn much that is evil, and hear very little of what is good. The Moslem idea of childhood's innocence is that their minds are like clean tablets equally open to any sort of inscription; the pity is that what is good and pure is left out, and what is evil is graven with an iron pen, and can never be erased.

One day we had a visit from the two small grandsons of the most important man in Shiraz. These children were thirteen and six and a half years old. They came with two carriages and twenty mounted attendants. Persians do love show, and a man's rank may often be known by the number of his servants. Six men, nurses and tutors came in with the little visitors, and, as they were still in the *anderūn*, a black eunuch. They stayed a long time, and were very much interested in a number of mechanical toys which we had, some of which we gave to them. The younger boy was a sweet child, but the elder one had a very grown-up air. Persian

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boys are treated by their attendants as though they were men.

As boys grow older they will go with their father when he visits his friends. They will quickly learn to deal out compliments: "May your shadow never grow less"; "May your hand never have a pain"; "May your kindness never become less." They will learn to understand etiquette and, among other things, know where they ought to sit, what they ought to say, and that when leaving a room they must put on the right shoe before the left, and so on.

If a boy gets the chance he will ride a horse without fear, and, digging his shovel stirrups into its side, rush madly ahead and then pull it up on its haunches, and look around for approbation. This is one of the few things over which he will show any energy, for naturally he loves ease and luxury. He will soon learn to smoke, and it will be good if he keeps from wine and opium. If a man is a mullā, a merchant, a farmer or a craftsman, his son may follow his profession, but the sons of Persia never lead a strenuous life, and if it is possible they prefer to be gentlemen at large. To do nothing gracefully is really a fine art in Persia; very few boys are attracted by a career. But we must not stay to follow them outside the portals of boyhood. With poorer children the boys are often apprenticed at five or six to some shopkeeper or craftsman. A cook will bring his small son with him to the kitchen, where he will quickly learn to help his father; he may draw water from the well, clean the rice, blow the fire, run an errand. A small boy may become a baker's *shāgird*, or disciple. He will carry the bread from the oven and lay it out in rows on the shop front; he will keep watch while his master goes to drink a glass of tea or

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smoke a *kalyān*. A plasterer has a small disciple who treads the lumps out of the lime, who brings water, fetches tea for his master, and generally waits on him. Small boys may not earn more than a halfpenny a day to start with, but they are learning at the same time and are kept, to some extent, out of mischief. Girls are betrothed at eight or nine and give their mothers very little more trouble.

There is one trade very largely followed by both boys and girls in Persia, and that is carpet weaving. They take their share in the making of family carpets, but the trouble comes when they work in the so-called carpet factories. Many of these are now in European hands, yet even there we meet the problem of child labour. In a large factory in Hamadan I heard lately that "no children under five" were employed! Generally speaking, the conditions under which Persian carpets are woven are no worse than the weavers would have in any other department of their lives. But there is an outstanding exception, and that is the case of the child weavers of Kirman. Both very fine carpets and *shāls* are the product of child labour, as the fine weaving can only be done by small fingers. Most of these children work in underground rooms, at upright looms, sitting on narrow planks which are often raised to a considerable height. There is no foot-rest, no back-rest, merely a six-inch plank. The hours of work are long, the rooms are not ventilated, the children are badly paid, and consequently badly fed and clothed. Many of them have opium-smoking parents who draw the children's wages in advance, so that, well or ill, they must go on with their work. A stranger going into one of these workrooms would think the children were singing, but they are merely repeating the pattern

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of the carpet which they are weaving. When the day's work is finished the overlooker claps his hands and those children who can, climb down and hurry away, but many sit on, waiting for someone to come and lift them down.

The consequence of these conditions is that a great number of child weavers become badly deformed, and few of the girls grow beyond three feet high. Yet they marry, and many mothers and babies die. Of late years hundreds of girls have been brought to the mission hospital, and many lives saved through the performance of the operation known as Cæsarean section. Public opinion is being aroused, and last year, at the invitation of some of the leading men of Kirman, a code of factory rules was drawn up by an English doctor, and it is hoped that the conditions will steadily, if slowly, improve, and that the weaving of some of Persia's most exquisite carpets may not mean the blighting of her childhood.

One most important side of life must not be forgotten, and that is education. We have seen how much of the handicap of childhood is due to the appalling ignorance of the mothers; what about the children of to-day? In the past education has been for the few, to-day it is demanded for the many. Boys in town or village are eager for education. European schools have done much to set a higher standard before the people. They are not quite so satisfied as they were that their boys should learn to read the Qu'ran in Arabic and be able to write a few words and figures in Persian. I was calling on the wife of a mullā one day who was an educated and enlightened woman. While we were having tea, which was poured out by a little child bride of nine from an adjoining house who was lonely and often came in to see our hostess, we heard some brisk footsteps, and in

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came a nice boy of about twelve with a satchel of books over his shoulder. He was very friendly, told me about his school, read a page from his French book and another from an English reader. He also had a simple science book and was looking forward to more advanced work. His mother was very proud of him. Before the boy came in she had asked me to read in Persian to her, and now after her boy's attainments she thought she would like to show me hers. She told him to bring the family copy of the Qu'ran from a bookshelf. The Qu'ran was at the top; the boy climbed up and took it down, put it to his forehead to show his reverence for it, dusted it, and then brought it on a stand to his mother. She also touched it with her forehead, and then turned to some passages in which the Virgin Mary is referred to; these she read in Arabic and translated into Persian. As an educated and open-minded woman who had come into contact with Englishwomen, she appreciated education for her boy, whom she wished to have an honourable profession, and her heart ached for the child wife whose "times were so bitter."

A large business enterprise in Persia is now giving very substantial help to a mission school, in the hope not only of getting educated boys for their employés, but boys who understand the meaning of truth and honour, who have Christian ideals, and who are out to make the best of life.

A boy from this particular school once asked his headmaster to come to his father's house that afternoon. When asked why he specially wanted him to come, he said that they were having a "sweet-eating" the following day, and that it was in connection with that that he wanted him to talk to his father. Soon the story came out that his little sister of eight was to be

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betrothed, and he wanted someone to persuade his father to postpone it. His headmaster gladly went, but the father was not to be moved from his purpose; it was their custom, it was a good match, and there was nothing more to be said. Why did that boy want something different done in the case of his sister? He had not had any teaching about it, but from his contact with Christian ideals, and from reading Western books, his outlook was changed; he saw the evil of this national and religious custom which wrecks so many young lives.

Those who know and love Persian boys and girls just long that their childhood may be given back to them in its fulness and beauty.

## CHAPTER XII

### PERSIAN GIRLS

**T**HE bearer of the news of the birth of a daughter to a father goes with fear and trembling. She will get no present; she is sure to get abuse. Meanwhile the mother may be in fear as to her fate. Her husband may divorce her; he certainly will be very angry and disappointed.

I was asked to go one day to a house to welcome a new baby. The father was a Sayyid, a descendant of the prophet, and as his only child was a very delicate little girl, he was longing for a son to carry on the descent of which he was so proud. This baby had been strong to begin with, but through improper feeding, heat, flies, and want of care, she, at fifteen months old, was always ailing. The Sayyid was a well-to-do farmer and could afford to have a nurse to carry the child about. The mother was a nice-looking girl of about seventeen.

When the invitation came I made various inquiries, and decided to delay my visit for an hour or two at least. When I got to the door of the compound there was no sound of music or revelry. In answer to my knocking a woman came to the door and took me into the men's room. Here the husband and several others were drinking tea and smoking. They were very polite, and asked me to sit down, but I thanked them and said that I had come to see the Sayyid's "house," might I join the ladies? He took me down two steps into the compound, and then



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up two or three more steps to the curtained doorway of another room, where he called out: "The lady has come." The room was crowded with women and children talking, shouting, smoking, and drinking tea. It was a very hot day, and the atmosphere of that room was far from refreshing. In one corner was the poor little mother propped up by cushions and wrapped round with a gaily coloured wadded quilt. She looked very ill, but no one was taking any notice of her, except to see that she did not go to sleep, not even giving her a cup of tea to keep her awake. I sat down by her, and said the usual polite sort of things: "May your eyes be enlightened"; "May it be blessed," and so on. Then for the first time I noticed a swaddled bundle tucked under the edge of the quilt; and there was the two-hour-old daughter, her great dark eyes outlined with collyrium, and her rosy cheeks tied up with pieces of muslin, which were put cornerways over a velvet cap, and brought under the chin, then crossed and tied at the back of the head. All her clothes were made of stiff dark prints, and she, all but her head and shoulders, was tied up in a print wrapper, just like a parcel. Poor unwelcome mite, what a blessing she could not understand the cold reception that was being afforded her. I felt indignant, but told them as pleasantly as I could something of Western ideas and customs. All they could say was: "This is our custom, it is *kismet*." A few days after, I heard that the elder child of fifteen months old was dead. The mother was dreadfully sad, but what could she do?—it was *kismet*.

Mothers who can afford it have foster-mothers for their babies. Sometimes these women take real care of their charges, but they understand nothing of the laws of health or of training. Often they may be

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diseased, and pass on most undesirable complaints to the children. Again it is *kismet*.

As a Persian girl grows up, if she is healthy and well fed, she will be a bright, jolly child, playing with other children, and listening to the conversation of her elders. She may have pretty clothes, but, generally speaking, Persian children have an uncared-for look. With her hair in ten or twelve plaits, which are rarely replaited, and a muslin *chācat* over her head which is constantly slipping down, smartness would be difficult. Contrast this with bobbed hair and a pretty bow of ribbon! As we have seen, some Persian girls play games of imagination with home-made dolls, but nothing is done to amuse or entertain or instruct them. Contrast this with the wonderful toys and games provided for English children. Again, a girl is neither trained nor educated. A Persian mother knows nothing of the possibilities of training, she knows nothing of psychology, and she has no one to help her. She lets her child grow up as she grew up. Her husband and her mother-in-law whipped her into shape; her child's future relations may do the same for her!

As a girl grows up she will take more interest in the gossip of the *anderūn*, and will understand more of it. Sometimes she will hear her own name, and references made to her betrothal. If she asks any questions she will probably be told falsehoods in return. It may sometimes happen that a mother will try to present the bright side of things to the child, and tell her of the gay new clothes and jewels and sweets, of the handsome bridegroom, and of the future house. The older the girl is, the less appeal this makes to her, for she has heard from others something of life's illusive nature.

There are two distinct parts to a marriage contract. First the arrangements are made by the parents or near

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relatives of the bride and bridegroom. The bride must be thoroughly examined by the man's relatives. The girl and her mother and other womenfolk meet the female relatives of the man, sometimes at a friend's house. Here the girl must take off her *chādar* and *chācat*; her head and hair are thoroughly examined, also her body, so that they can satisfy themselves that she is sound and healthy and clean. After this, various negotiations as to her dowry and hire, and his and her contributions to their future house, having been satisfactorily settled, a lucky day is decided upon for the betrothal or "sweet-eating." This is a legal ceremony, and a signed contract is given by the *mullā* which is absolutely binding. Some months, or, if the bride is very young, years, may elapse before the second part takes place, which is the wedding proper, after which the bride goes to her husband's house.

When a girl is eight or nine, or sometimes younger, there will be a good deal of fuss and excitement, buying and making of new clothes, and a general air of mystery about things. Then will come a very long visit to the public bath; not merely the child and her mother, as they have often gone before, but various other women and girls will accompany them. Her hands and feet will be dyed with henna; sometimes an elaborate pattern will be painted on her feet with indigo. Her hair will be treated with henna, and plaited in the finest plaits possible over the top of her head and down her back. All the attention is centred on her, and there is much noise and excitement. At the bath there will be a great many other women and children, and it will be quickly known that she is an *arūs*, or bride. Her own womenfolk may try to keep it from her, but it will be difficult. When they get back to the house, trays of sweets and

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biscuits and clothes will arrive, presents from the bridegroom. The child will probably ask what all these are for, and she may be told a lie, or the truth; in the latter case she will make a protest: "I don't want to be married," "I have no use for a husband," and so on. But her wishes and her opinions are never consulted or considered.

Individual arrangements and local customs, also social fashions in marriage, vary in different families, provinces, and classes of society, as they do with us. May I describe some of the marriage customs as I have seen them?

One evening about sunset an invitation came asking me to go to a wedding in a neighbouring house. This had all been arranged rather quickly, and the bride was to go to her husband's house the next day. When I arrived I was taken at once into a room where there were a number of women in a great state of fuss and excitement. They were laughing and talking loudly. Several of them were bestowing their attention on the little bride, a child of not more than ten, though they said she was twelve. This individual was protesting loudly: "I don't want to be married, I want to go to school. I won't be married." No notice was taken of anything she said, but her relatives went on putting the final touches to her toilet. A sister lent her a gold necklace, all her clothes were new and pretty, her hair had been plaited at the bath and her hands and feet dyed. She had flowers in her hair and a tinsel veil over everything. At last she was finished and put to sit on the ground facing a large looking-glass. In front of this there were lighted lamps and candles, vases of flowers and trays of sweets and biscuits, also some fine-looking English shoes and some clothes, all presents from the bridegroom.

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I sat behind the bride and could see her face in the looking-glass. When she was settled, still crying, but not loudly as she had been when I went in, the chief guest, who was the bridegroom's sister, went out to see if the mullā or Muhammadan priest, had arrived. She soon came back, saying he was ready for the ceremony. The bride was sitting facing the mirror, which was placed at a right angle to a closed and curtained door which opened into an adjoining room. Sounds of voices had been coming from this room; they now stopped, and a big voice asked if we were ready. The answer was given, and then the owner of the voice, who was a mullā, said something like the following:—

“Maliké Bagūm Khanūm, are you willing to accept Agha Muhammad Ali as your husband? He will pay the usual dowry in money, and will give you a pair of gold earrings, gold bracelets, and a ring, a pair of new shoes, a coat and chādar, two lamps, a looking-glass and a copy of the most blessed Qu'ran. From your own family you will receive all your *laharfs* [or eiderdowns], your cooking utensils, a samovar and tea service, your personal clothing and dowry boxes in which to keep your possessions. You see what high regard Muhammad Ali has for you, in that he has arranged such a rich dowry for you. Therefore, Maliké Bagūm Khanūm, I ask you, Do you accept Agha Muhammad Ali as your husband?”

When the mullā paused there was silence, and all the women pressed round the bride, saying: “Say yes.” Instead of doing what they told her, she said in a faint whisper: “I don't want to.” The mullā then asked: “Did she say yes?” The answer given was: “No, Agha; you must ask her again.”

So a second time all the attractions of the bridegroom

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and of all that would come to her through her marriage with him were set out, and the question was asked again: "Do you accept him as your husband?" This time the women were more pressing than before in their desire that she should answer as they intended, and amid many voices saying, "Say yes," the bride, with an oath, said: "I won't." Again the mullā asked: "Did she say yes?" and receiving the same reply as before, he for the third time asked the same question. The women, including her sister, with whom she had been living, and the bridegroom's sister, who thought that she would be a very nice little wife for her brother, simply overpowered her, and very falteringly she said "Yes." The mullā asked if she had said "yes," and then said: "I pronounce Muhammad Ali and Maliké Bagūm to be husband and wife, and I declare their marriage legal and binding. May the blessing of Allāh rest upon them." While this was being said, a piece of bread was held over the bride's head, sweets were sprinkled over her, which the women quickly picked up and ate, as a "bride's sweetmeat" brings good luck. This finished, they all began to clap their hands in a rhythmical way, and some, getting tired of this, turned to the tom-toms, which produced more noise than music. But to them this hand-clapping and beating of tom-toms expresses, as nothing else can, their feelings of excitement and festivity, and there is certainly something infectious about it when you are sitting with those who are doing it. It is a sound often heard in Persian streets, especially during the wedding season, and it is sometimes kept up all night for some time after the wedding. One prefers that the wedding should not be in an adjoining house! On a large tray, besides the bread and sweets, there was a saucer with some sort of butter or fat, signifying the hope that life might be

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free from friction; a piece of knotted cord, an emblem of the tying of the matrimonial knot; also a plate of grain, signifying fruitfulness, while the bread was an expression of the hope that they might enjoy plentifulness and prosperity. All this we feel is good so far as it goes, but what is desired and what actually happens are often remote from each other.

The next thing was a glass of very sweet tea for everyone and the *kalyān* was smoked by those who liked it. After this I was asked if I would mind if the bridegroom came in to look at the bride. I said I thought it the most natural thing that a bridegroom should be seen at his own wedding. So again his sister was dispatched with the invitation. She came back quickly, saying that he was bringing his excellency. Everyone but myself quickly drew her *chādar* over her face, leaving only a little peep-hole for one eye, and when the door opened everyone stood up and said "Salaam." The bridegroom sat down in front of the mirror by the bride, and if she had felt reluctant before, she must have felt very much more so now that she saw him. He was at least old enough to be her grandfather, and looked cross and disagreeable. A glass of tea was handed to him, and when it was finished he looked sideways in the glass and had the first sight of his bride. He looked absolutely indifferent, and neither spoke nor smiled. The *kalyān* was then brought to him, followed by more tea, after which he asked permission to go. As soon as the door closed on him there were sighs of relief, *chādars* were put back and the clapping and tom-toms started again.

Soon after this I left. The next day I heard that the tearful bride was feeling better—the bridegroom had given the promised earrings and had taken her and her belongings off to his village, about thirty miles away.

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His wife had died three months before and left him with three small children; they needed someone to take care of them and he had married this child. Poor little soul, as though it was not hard enough for her to leave school and be married to this old man, when she was so young, but to have this added burden of the care of these other children! From the side of these children too, life held little chance for them to make good. It was all very sad, and made one ask: "Why is it allowed?" The answer was that schooling was not for girls, they were safer if married early, and that the older a husband was, the better was he able to take care of his wife!

Customs vary greatly in regard to weddings; a girl is often betrothed at seven or eight, in which case she will be left with her mother for some years. Very sweet and appealing are some of these little brides. If you remonstrate about the wrong of it, the mothers will say: "How can we do better than did his Excellency the Prophet? He married one of his wives, Ayishah, when she was eight, and gave his only daughter Fatimah to Ali when she was eight."

When a bride who was betrothed when she was very young is taken to her husband's house, she will be taken, if rich, in a carriage; if this is not possible, on a donkey, dressed in the best clothes that can be afforded. Her mother may take her, but in many cases an aunt or other relative goes with her, and stays for a few days to see her settled down. Her trousseau will be taken in the dowry boxes, which are like large trunks and often are covered with brightly coloured velvet.

On this wedding day there will be a great many guests, sometimes several rooms being full of people, men and women of course separately. The poor little bride generally looks very stolid and is silent. She



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stays in one room and all the women guests come and gaze at her. She may be very much made up with powder and paint, her cheeks a bright pink, and her eyebrows meeting over her nose. She will have a tinsel garland or artificial flowers in her hair, gloves on and rings worn over them, and a gay tinsel veil over everything.

There are often dancing boys to entertain the men, and dancing girls, who are dressed like boys, to enliven the day in the *anderūn*. Tea and sweets and smokes are handed round constantly. The crowds and noise are bearable for perhaps half-an-hour, when, with many polite phrases and good wishes, it is possible to leave. The Persian visitors stay for hours and thoroughly enjoy it all. Dinner is provided for all the guests at night.

One day when going along a quiet street several women and girls came up to me in a great state of agitation and asked if I could tell them where they could find a "tooth-maker." I asked them why they wanted a dentist, and they explained how a girl of thirteen, who was one of them, had broken a front tooth, and they were very much afraid that if the bridegroom knew he would refuse to marry her. Hence their eagerness to have the defect remedied before his relatives saw her again. I told them where they could find a dentist, and they went off quickly to see what he would do for them.

I was visiting some well-to-do people in a village near Isfahān when among the various neighbours who came in to have a look at the *Farangi*, or European, was a very pretty girl of about twelve years of age, named Tel Tel. I asked who she was, and was told that she was the orphan niece of a woman who lived in the next house. Seeing that I was interested in the child,

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they told me that her father had left her some money, and after her mother's death an aunt had taken her to bring up. It was soon known in the village that she had money, and she was married when very young to a man thirty years her senior. He represented to her guardians that he wanted to start business as a muleteer, and persuaded them to let him have his wife's money to buy mules and pack-saddles. Very soon after this he and his mules set out on a journey and were never seen nor heard of again. The child's money had all gone, and she was dependent on her aunt, and her future seemed very uncertain. She was an intelligent girl and I suggested that for the time she could not do better than go to school. After some persuasion her relatives agreed to this. She went to school, and proved clever and promising, and thoroughly enjoyed the freedom of her new life. I had something to do with this little school, and one day, after Tel Tel had been coming for some weeks, the mother of another pupil came to see me, and said: "I am not going to send my daughter to the school any more, and some of the other mothers say they will take their girls away too." I asked the reason for this, and she said: "We don't think it good that a girl who has been married should come to school with our girls. Her mind has been poisoned with all that she has seen and known, and she is not fit to mix with our daughters." I promised to see into the case, but on my first inquiry I was told that dear little Tel Tel with the bright face had left the school. Evidently pressure had been brought to bear on the relatives and they had done what the others wanted.

It would be wrong to say that there are no happy marriages in Persia. There are nice men, and sweet girls are found there as well as anywhere else, but their

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ideas are on such a low level, there is little of soul or spirit in the union of man and wife. She is his property, to do with as he likes. A wedding is a greater expense to the family of the bride than to that of the bridegroom, and a girl when married is not expected to do anything more for her parents. These reasons have much to do with the relative values put upon girls and boys in a family.

## CHAPTER XIII

### EDUCATION

**E**DUCATION, as it has been in the past, is in the present, and will, we hope, be in the near future, must next be considered.

Education, like everything else in the land of the Shah, has been controlled by Islām, whose prophet said in regard to girls: "Do not teach them the art of writing." There is still a common saying that a woman who is taught to write is like a serpent which is given poison to drink. For centuries religion and public opinion have been against the education of girls. A few have been taught privately by a visiting mullā or a woman, but proper schools and modern education have been unknown.

A Persian lady once told me of her early school experiences. Her father was an educated man, and as she seemed to be a clever child he decided to have her taught. After some inquiry he heard of a so-called "school" not very far from where they lived, and arrangements were made for B., who was then five years old, to go to it. She was taken the next morning by a woman servant and handed over to the veiled figure who came to the door, but who opened it so little that the servant could not see inside. The compound was very small, and B. was taken across to a room opening on to a verandah on the sunny side, as it was winter. Here there were six or seven other girls sitting on a

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ragged carpet, who showed by their faces how interested they were in the new-comer. The woman who had opened the door was the schoolmistress. She had a good deal to say as to what the new pupil would learn, and expressed extravagant hopes as to her success. After this she offered her a tiny glass of very weak, sweet tea. When the tea was finished she brought down from a shelf a long thin cane, and holding one end of it in her right hand, put the other on the child's tongue, saying: "This has sealed your tongue; you are never to tell anyone about what you do here, except to say that you are very happy and becoming a good scholar. If you say anything else the seal will break, and I shall know. So do not forget." The child was too frightened to do anything but say: "Very well." This ceremony over, the other girls opened their books and began to spell out the words with great difficulty. When they made mistakes they were scolded. The new pupil sat alone and listened in silence. After about half-an-hour of this the "schoolmistress" put on her *chādar* and *rū-bāndah*, and, taking a bundle from the *tākchah*, said: "I am going out, get on with your work until I come back; you know what it is." For a few moments they sat still, lest she should reappear, then, feeling that this was not likely, they began to run about and play. After letting off steam in this way, one of them brought a brush and attempted to sweep out the room and verandah, while the others tried to shake the tattered carpet. Then they sat down and cleaned several pounds of rice. The new pupil could not understand this; in her father's house all the work was done by servants; would she ever have to sweep and prepare food as the others were doing? Her first thought was to consult her mother about it, and then she remembered her promise and the spell which had

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been cast over her. By this time the other girls had finished their work, so they all sat on the floor and ate the lunch which they had brought with them, and after this they lay down on the carpet to sleep. Late in the afternoon the "schoolmistress" returned, and they were allowed to go home.

This sort of thing went on day after day; sometimes rather longer lessons were given, but all the work of the house was left to the children. One day B. was told to get the samovar ready; she had never done this before, and she let a piece of red-hot charcoal fall on to her frock, which burnt a hole right in the front of it. To hide it was impossible; try as she would, her chādar would not cover it, and of course her mother saw it and asked how she did it. She was not versed in the art of lying, as most Persian children are, yet she was very much afraid to tell the truth when she remembered the stick. At last it came out that she had been preparing a samovar! Her mother was furious; inquiries were made, and it was discovered that the "schoolmistress" spent most of her days sitting by the roadside begging, which she found a more profitable profession than teaching, while her husband was also a beggar, who sat outside a mosque and read the Qu'ran.

Another "school" was heard of, where more teaching was given, and B. made rapid strides in reading and writing. This "schoolmistress," however, used to spin cotton, and was constantly going to the bāzār on one pretext or another. When she went out, B. was told to look after the old mother-in-law, who was most disagreeable and exacting. Things got so bad that B. made up her mind that she would not go to school. She was now allowed to go alone, and one day, instead of going to school, she walked about the streets. This

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particular day was a feast day, and about ten o'clock a cannon was fired. Thinking that this was the noonday gun, she went home. Unfortunately for her, her father was in the house, and she was beaten unmercifully, but she never went to that "school" again!

A third "school" was discovered and to this she was sent with her younger sister, who was to report on conditions. Here there was only one other pupil and she was a poor child. Again the work of the house was done by the children, but most of it by the poor child. This "schoolmistress" was very proud of B., and taught her to read the Qu'ran in Arabic. If her lessons were well done and her other work finished, she allowed B. to read a Persian book called *Teaching of Children—Moral Stories. Good and Bad Children and the Result*. Most of the stories were in poetry and impressed B. so much that years after she was able to tell me several of them.

But enough of schools of the past. I should not like to say that all teachers of girls were like the three just described, still conditions which have allowed such to exist must have been pretty bad. The old saying, "A mule went into school and came out a donkey," shows what people used to think about schools, and also what the schools were like which gave rise to such an opinion. To-day the old type of school is looked upon as worse than useless.

Some time after this last experience B.'s father came to live in Teheran, and his daughters were sent to the American Presbyterian school there. The Americans have had this school for about fifty years and it has reached a high standard of efficiency. At first it was only for Armenian girls, but now there are as many Moslems as Christians. In the early days prejudice was strong, and it was only by paying surprise visits and

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finding that nothing dreadful was being done that Moslem parents were gradually able to overcome their suspicions and send their daughters to a foreign school. But we are told that in the year 1911 confidence had been so far gained that one hundred and twenty Moslem girls were admitted to this school, who paid over £200 in fees.

The buildings and playground are excellent, and everything is up-to-date. The mistresses are American, Armenian and Persian. The girls work up for "graduation," and many are at school until they are eighteen.

One day the headmistress of a Government school was being taken over this school and expressed her delight at "the blackboards that do not rub off," and at "nice desks and clean maps," and said: "If this school in its perfection were known, you would have a thousand girls begging for admission. I have visited every school in the city and only here have I found real learning." The American missionaries were the first to introduce higher education into the country, in 1836. They have a large number of girls' schools in the north, and the Fiske Seminary in Urumiah is still the leading school for girls in Persia. The Church Missionary Society has excellent schools for Armenian, Parsi and Moslem girls in various centres. The Armenians have good national schools in Julfa and half-a-dozen other towns, and the Roman Catholics in Teheran and elsewhere. There are large schools for Jewish girls in Teheran and Isfahān in connection with the Alliance Israel and the Church Missions to Jews. In all these schools, American, French and English, as good an education is being given as is possible under the prevailing conditions.

As a result of so much education being offered to girls



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by foreigners, the Persians themselves have come to see the necessity of it.

In 1911, for the first time in their history, Persian women held a large meeting in Teheran to discuss the problems of education.

There is now a Minister of Education, and schools are provided for girls as well as boys, and of the forty free primary schools in Teheran ten are for girls. It is a remarkable advance for 1200 girls to be getting a *free* education from the Persian Government.

There are at least fifty Government schools in Teheran for girls, and others in the provinces. Diplomas are awarded and the mistresses are formally appointed.

The two children who suffered so many things from their teachers in their childhood are now both on the Government staff: one is a school inspector in Teheran and the other has a school in another town. When a Normal school was opened by the Government in Teheran, several American missionaries were asked to become lecturers. The Bahā'īs have a number of girls' schools in Teheran and other places.

If the demand for education has regulated the supply, it is evident that a very great change has come over the Persians. An incident which happened in Shiraz two or three years ago shows both the old and new attitude. Some educated women went from the capital to Shiraz and, seeing the possibilities of the city, opened a new girls' school. This was hailed with delight, and many came. The mullās on hearing of it said that it must be closed. The prince governor was an enlightened man with a modern outlook, and he held out and said that the school was needed, and ought not to be closed. As the mullās insisted, he asked them to give their reason, which was summed up in a quotation from the Qu'ran, and

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the words: "Islām does not allow the education of girls." However, whether it is allowed or not, many mean to have it. The attitude of the Shiraz mullās would hinder rather than help the prestige of Islām, and I hear that in spite of them there are several girls' schools in Shiraz. Some people, of course, distrust all new movements, and deplore the freedom of thought and action which school life makes possible for a girl. At the same time the general attitude is in favour of education, and this not only means that girls desire it, but that men are willing that they should have it. This surely points to the fact that the men are beginning to realize the handicap which has been put upon women, and are desirous that it should be removed.

Emancipation is not likely to come through the women's protests or pleadings, but through the understanding of their need both by themselves and by the men. Until women are educated they can have no idea of the greatness of their need or of their latent power. Western women have shown the value of education, consequently many women have come to wish for it, and an increasing number of men, in Persia and other Moslem lands, are withdrawing their objections to it.

A third change has yet to come, and that must be in the interpretation of the system which has made the seclusion of women's persons and the swaddling of their intellects a religious command and a political policy.

A young convert to Bahaïsism recently gave among the reasons for his change of religion, that Islām hindered all progress and would not tolerate modern education for all classes and both sexes, and that it gave such a low position to women. On the other hand, Bahaïsism advocated the equality of the sexes, and the need for using every means by which progress may be made.

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Example has much to do with the creation of public opinion, which in time creates custom, and while Christianity and Bahaïsm both offer education to girls, Islām does not believe in it nor allow it. What is this going to mean in Persia?

It is difficult to foretell what the future will bring in the way of intellectual development for girls, but there can scarcely be a backward movement. The thousands of girls who are at school now will not be married at eight or nine years old like their mothers were; and when they do marry they will be much better fitted for life's responsibilities. And more than this, they will wish their own girls to be educated and their sons to marry educated wives.

Moslem education mainly consists in learning the Arabic Qu'ran and the Persian poets, the chief sources of knowledge, by rote; the mind is not trained, and as to domestic science and other useful subjects for girls, they are unknown, or were until lately. The value of such knowledge is now being appreciated, and the available school books are increasing, and though they appear clumsy to us, the native teachers and pupils find them delightful. Many of the teachers in the Government schools are old girls from mission schools, who naturally take much of the spirit of one class of school to another. Western schools have opened the way, and education in Persia will be influenced by Western ideas and ways for years to come.

Persians are very keen on having their own schools, and we wish them every success, yet one hears sometimes of cases which show that they are still far behind the Western schools. For instance, I heard once that in one year seventy schools for girls had been opened in one city, but owing to incompetent teachers nearly all of them had

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been closed. Education must include physical training; it must inculcate ideals of honour, truth and fair play. The best education that can at this juncture be offered to Persian children is that which is based upon Christianity. Bahaism puts new ideals before them, but it tells them nothing of the power by which those ideals may be reached. The present opportunity of setting a high standard, not only of education, but of moral training, is in the hands of foreigners. A man was telling a friend that he was going to send his children to a mission school, as they would get the best education there. His friend said: "Do you know that they read the Bible in those schools?" "I don't care if they do," was the reply. "They can give them six lessons a day from the Bible, if only they make men of them."

A leader in the Persian Parliament said to the late Dr Esselstyn: "There is nothing more important to the future welfare of Persia than the education of our girls. The hope of our country is their education, and we shall never have statesmen until the mothers are educated."

An educated Moslem brought his little girl to the American school in Teheran and said: "I regret that my wife is uneducated, but I want my daughter to take her diploma. After that I want her to give her life to educational work among the women of Persia."

In Kirman a wealthy Persian gave a site for a girls' school and £200 towards the building.

These instances may not appear great, but they point to an astonishing development in the thought and attitude of men towards women.

In a women's paper someone was writing about a girls' school, and said: "Several friends and sisters of mine, all Persian girls, were invited to this earthly paradise—that is, a school. Now I want you also to accept my

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invitation; you will read sweet stories and taste all the delights of wisdom.”

Schools are wanted and appreciated, and the best that can be given in the way of education is needed. The people are worth it and their intelligence demands it.

## CHAPTER XIV

### DRESS

**P**ERSIAN dress of olden times for both men and women has been frequently illustrated and explained. The men's dress of to-day is dignified and artistic. Gay colours are often worn out of doors, lettuce-green, heliotrope, canary-yellow, crimson, and an endless variety of blues all being seen at the New Year, when most clothes are new. As the year goes on, fawns and greys and drabs seem to predominate, some being the bright colours grown old, while the loose flowing *abba* of camel's hair, or black or cream-coloured woollen muslin, floats from the shoulders. The whole is surmounted by a turban or a tall, tight-fitting, rimless felt or lambskin hat. In strong contrast with this variety of colour and style is the monotonous dress of the women. This is seldom seen in illustrations, as it has neither beauty of shape nor shade. Still less often seen are pictures of women in indoor dress, as their faces must not be seen by unrelated men, not even in a picture.

The styles favoured for indoor dress have long been governed by the ballet dancer's dress, the wearing of which was ordered by Nasru-din-Shah after one of his visits to Paris. At the present time modern European fashions are making themselves felt and changes are coming rapidly.

Country women wear moderately long and very full skirts, sometimes decorated with bands of insertion or

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trimming at the hem. The feet and legs are often bare, shoes only being worn. A tight-fitting cotton shirt, generally originally white or red, and opening down the front, is worn over the skirt, and a jacket of some thicker material, always lined, is worn over the shirt. Hats of any kind are unknown to Muhammadan women in Persia, the *chācat* universally takes its place. This is always worn, both indoors and outdoors. With village women it may be of plain muslin or of print. The usual size is about a yard and a half square. This is folded corner-wise and pinned under the chin. There is a knack in putting on a *chācat* properly. It is not merely put over the head and fastened under the chin, but first stretched tightly across the forehead and then a sharp inward turn is given, so that the sides rather overlap the top piece; this makes it much more becoming. In some out-of-the-way villages I have seen women out of doors like this, but the custom is that a cotton prayer *chādar* is worn over this dress indoors, and for the street an outdoor *chādar*. These prayer *chādars*, so called because worn during prayer, are not such shapeless pieces of material as might at first be thought. A woman's measurement is taken from the front of her forehead over her head to within an inch or two of the ground at the back. This measurement is taken as the radius of a half-circle, and the *chādar*, which is half-a-circle in shape, is cut accordingly. The result is that the *chādar* hangs evenly all round, fitting snugly at the top and being full at the bottom; it has no kind of fastening. A bead or small button, or even a knot of thread, is sewn on the middle of the selvedge, so marking the piece which is to be directly above the nose. The circular edge may be left raw, or it may be hemmed. I have sometimes been asked, as a great favour, to machine the hem of a *chādar*,



#### A PAIR OF KADJAVEHS AND A TAKHT-A-RAVAN READY FOR A JOURNEY.

The ponies behind the Kadjavehs are carrying another takht-a-ravan. They are used by women and sick people, and offer a measure of comfort but not of speed.

#### WOMEN'S DRESS.

The woman on the left is a Villager in outdoor dress which consists of a home-woven check Chādar and Chak chūs over which the shoes are worn.

On the right is a well-to-do woman in indoor dress. She is wearing a prayer chadar of pink muslin with a pattern of dark rose buds; the skirt, coat, short full skirts, long white trousers and white



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and these hems have seemed interminable. It is amusing to see the cutting out of a chādar. It is, of course, done on the floor, and while the first width is a single length, the second, and if for a tall woman the third, may have several joins. An all-over pattern of flowers or small sprigs or stripes is most usually worn. A prayer chādar is occasionally seen in a village street, but it is very transparent, and really only a house garment. The outdoor dress for a village woman is a heavy chādar made to the same measurement as the muslin one, but left square instead of circular. A tape or strap is sewn half-way down the front on each side, so making a long loop which is put over the head and keeps the garment fairly well in place. These chādars are made of coarse cotton material which is woven in the village, often by the wearer. Each village has its own special colouring and pattern, so that it is possible in an assembly of village folk at a "Tazieh," or in a dispensary waiting-room, to locate them. They are mostly checks; some are intricate and rather like Scotch plaids, of red and black, and white and yellow, and blue and green, though one colour usually predominates; many are simple black and white, or blue and white, or red and blue checks, varying in size from a shepherd's plaid to a check two inches square. It is, of course, not possible for each of Persia's 40,000 villages to have a different pattern, but villages near together generally manage a good variety, so that a stranger appearing in a village would be noticed at once. These country women wear no veils, but keep their faces very carefully covered when out of doors, one eye only being uncovered. Village chādars are heavy and uncomfortable in wear, as they drag at the top and cling at the bottom; they are cool in winter and hot in summer. Still, use is everything, and, never having known anything better,

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the wearers do not complain. In the winter they may wear tweed or velvet coats over their cotton ones. Most brides have a plush or velvet coat, and after a time this is taken into everyday use.

The indoor dress of townswomen varies considerably, according to their age, class and enlightenment. The ordinary short, full skirts leave much to be desired. Petticoats and over skirts are all made very full and arranged as divided skirts, and are worn high on the hips and low in front. The average length is about twelve inches, and the width eight yards; the under skirts will be white, and the outer one will match the jacket. This may be of print or rich brocade. With these short skirts, long, tight-fitting black or white trousers are worn; longer skirts are worn by older women. The chācats worn by well-to-do women are either of new white book-muslin, or a muslin with a square pattern on it, or of muslin or net embroidered with coloured silk, or with gold or silver thread. They are often stiffened and shaped so that they fit well over the head. Many beautiful chādars are worn of brightly coloured silks, and when Europeans are present these are dropped and folded round the waist to look like skirts. A number of Persian ladies in indoor dress present a very gay appearance. Jewellery is not worn to the same extent as, for instance, in India, and rings and necklets are most in favour. Charms are very often pretty and elaborate, but they will be referred to in a later chapter.

Many Persian women are keen on European dress in the house. Sometimes it is ludicrous: a middle-aged woman will be wearing a one-piece frock made for a child of ten or twelve; it may be only just below her knees, and she will still wear her long, tight-fitting black or white trousers and her muslin chācat. She wears it,

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too, with such an air of grandeur and importance, feeling that she is dressed as a *Farangi*. An Englishman told me that he saw a Persian woman in the Lal-i-Zar, the chief shopping street in Teheran, "wearing corsets outside her ordinary garments."

On the other hand, many are much more successful, and wear very pretty silk and muslin frocks, or cloth or serge coats and skirts, and of a reasonable length. There are Parisian dressmakers in Teheran, and many of the rich ladies are very smart. I have often been asked to lend a set of my "latest clothes from London" to the ladies of an *anderūn*, as they wish to try them on, and if they suit them they want to use them as patterns. I have been very careful as to what I have lent, knowing the fate awaiting my clothing.

I was once asked to lend a child's white silk frock, to be worn by a six-year-old princess at her betrothal. We quite appreciate their admiration of our styles, and for their own sakes should like them imitated, if they can do so properly.

The outdoor dress of the townswomen is uniform in style, but varies greatly in quality. The black sateen *chādars* of the poor are worn until they bear no resemblance to the original, but are drab or green with dust and age.

The upper-class women wear *chādars* made of black satin or heavy silk. The narrow coloured selvedge is always left on and is ornamental and useful in distinguishing one *chādar* from another when folded up. The veil, or *rū-bandah*, is made of cambric, and is about half-a-yard wide and a yard and a half long, reaching well below the knees. Over the eyes it has a lattice, four inches wide, of exquisitely fine drawn-threadwork, and it is only through this that the wearer may look

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on the outer world. It is fastened at the back of the head with a clasp. This may be of gold, silver or brass, according to the means of the wearer. It is generally set with a turquoise or other stone, or a large piece of coloured glass in imitation of a ruby or emerald or turquoise. These clasps may be bought at all prices, from twopence upwards. As the *chādar* and the *rū-bandah* are a complete disguise, the clasp is very useful for distinguishing the wearer, most of her friends recognizing it.

When the *chācchus*, or over-trousers, which are worn out of doors, are new, they may be bright blue, green, mauve, drab or black, but the coloured ones very quickly look the worse for wear. They are made with tight-fitting feet, into which the very full trouser leg is gathered, and they are excellent for keeping out the dust. Most Persian clothing is adapted for hot, dusty weather, and when rain or snow comes the wearers find themselves in difficulties; consequently very few people venture out, unless absolutely compelled. In recent years there has been a tendency to resent the veil and to replace it with what is called a *pêchée*. This is made of black horsehair; the patterns, which are finely woven, are varied and pretty, but they can be distinguished only at close quarters. These horsehair shields are about nine inches square; they are bound at the top with a piece of ribbon, and have ribbon strings, sometimes coloured, with which they are tied round the head. They are worn under the *chādar*, not over it as the white veils are. A *pêchée* is much cooler and more comfortable in wear, and is becoming the recognized fashion for those who can afford it.

Women like white cotton gloves. These sometimes have coloured embroidery on the backs, and rings are

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often worn over them. Many rings have stones in a high setting and it would be difficult to put a glove finger over them, but it is also because it is grander to show the rings. One gloved and ringed hand generally holds the *pêchéé* down. I once dressed as a Persian woman, with *chādar*, *pêchéé*, gloves and rings, and drove with two Persian friends to a very famous mosque. After spending some time in the building and surrounding courts, we walked back through side streets, and I never realized before the discomfort of being a Persian woman—walking along very dusty roads with long black draperies, under the burning rays of the sun, with nothing over my head but two layers of book-muslin and one of silk, no hat, no sunshade, no air, nothing to help one's progress, everything to hinder it.

A Persian woman is decidedly at a disadvantage out of doors, and until recently among the discomforts were the native-made shoes. In colour and appearance they are very pretty, yellow, green, blue and red leather all being used. But they have only a front piece, with nothing to keep the shoe on behind, or if there is a back piece, it is usually folded down, the heel has a heavy iron tip, and in consequence the shoe is always loose at the heel and flaps up and down. One reason for this is that the shoes can be much more easily slipped off at the door of a room, and the other that it is next to impossible for a woman to go out without being heard. The soft cotton shoes, or *givehs*, are seldom worn by women. I shall never forget taking a Persian woman with me on a journey, and the distress and discomfort she suffered through her dreadful shoes when it came to walking down a stony mountain-side. Though it was against custom, I took the first chance of buying her a comfortable pair of *givehs*, and she was another woman.

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European outdoor shoes and dress shoes are now very much taking the place of the heelless native shoes ; and stockings are replacing socks. Persian shoemakers are very clever in their imitation of Western footwear, and sensible leather shoes, or even high-laced boots, are worn by all who can afford them.

There has been a very decided fashion in hairdressing in recent years. This applies chiefly to the front of the hair, which is elaborately waved. Curling-tongs are often seen in *anderūns*, and they are in constant use to keep the deep furrows of hair in order. Most Persian women have naturally black hair, but if nature has given them some other colour, they find it quite easy to dye it. The hair is usually parted at one side, and married women have a fringe cut over the ear. The hair at the back is done in a number of plaits, which hang down, often below the waist. Any other arrangement of hair would be impossible with all the head draperies. Old people dye their hair either blue-black or red.

Persian children are dressed very much as their elders are. They grow up so much more quickly than our children do, that a distinctive dress seems unnecessary, and the mothers seem to think children's clothing quite unworthy of any thought or care. All babies are swaddled, and go almost directly from swaddling clothes to grown-up garments. At first sight a boy looks as though he is wearing petticoats, and a girl trousers. The fact is that the boys wear very full trousers, gathered round the waist with a string, and over them one or two long coats. The best style of coat has a great deal of material in it, and is pleated fully all round the waist. This shape is usually made in cloth, various shades of blue being specially popular. The girls really do wear long trousers, either black or white,

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and then very short skirts or frills round their waists. As tiny things they may simply wear a house or muslin chādar over this sort of dress for the street, but as soon as they are betrothed the black chādar and veil are essential. And, even in this dress, a girl is seldom allowed out for a year after her marriage.

Going to bed and getting up is a very easy matter for a Persian; it merely involves taking off and putting on the outer garment. The time for changing clothes is when the public bath is visited, when, after the bath, everything must be put on fresh. I have met women who have said they had not been to the bath for months because they had no clean clothes to put on. It seems as impossible to have a bath without clean clothes as to put on clean clothes without going to the bath!

## CHAPTER XV

### PERSIAN HOUSES

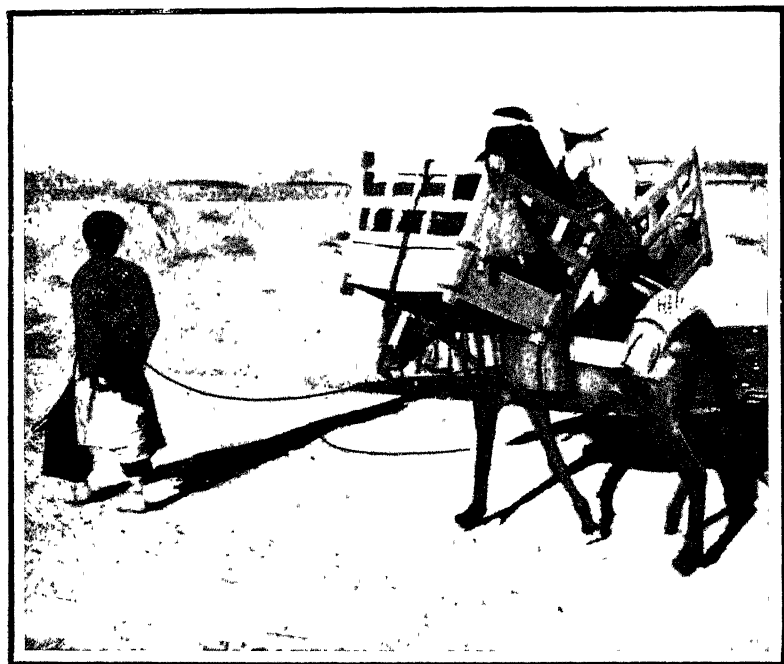
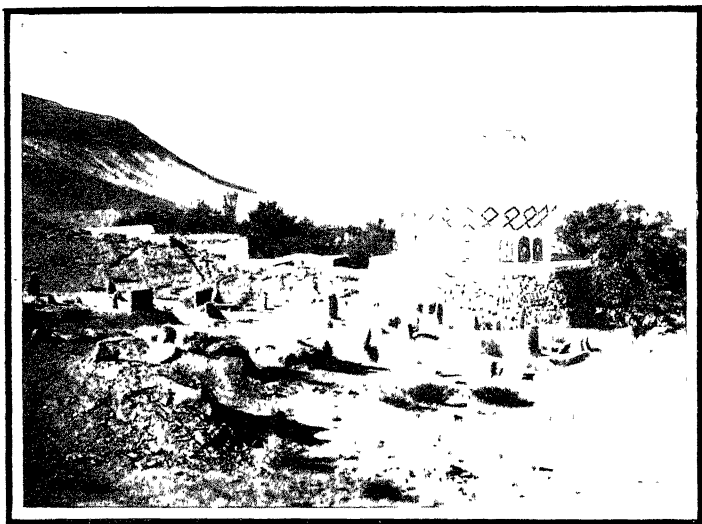
**H**OUSES in Persia vary as much as in England. There are veritable palaces and there are hovels, and no one description can cover them all, though there are features common to all which make them differ essentially from houses in the West.

As you go along the streets, little is seen except high walls with heavy pillared, or low, insignificant-looking doorways at long intervals, and glimpses of higher walls inside.

Persian governors are always on the look-out for money, and if a rich man had a fine exterior to his house it would not be long before much of his wealth would find its way into the governor's pocket. Consequently what is visible from the street gives little idea of the beautiful houses which are often found inside such dull-looking walls. No windows are seen from the street; this is to safeguard the women from the eyes of strangers. The door opens on to a long and often dark passage which leads into a compound. This may be a small paved yard, or a shady garden with trees and flowers, fountains and tanks, with the house built round it.

In a large house the men's and women's apartments are quite distinct, and are very often in separate compounds. That this is an old Persian custom can be gathered from the expressions in the Book of Esther:





#### TILED DOME OF SHRINE AT SOH

This is the burial place of a saint, and it is a meritorious act to visit the shrine. The blue tiled dome gives a lovely bit of colour to the brown hill side.

#### A HUSBAND AND WIFE IN PALAKIS

Notice the skin water bottle behind the woman, also the large bells round the mule's neck.

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“court of the women’s house”; “out of the house of the women into the king’s house.”

The men’s part of the house is called the *birūn* or *mardānah* and the women’s the *anderūn* or *zanānah*. (The Persian word for “woman” is *zan*, from which the Indian word *zenana* is derived, but this and *baram*, though understood, are seldom used in Persia.) The *anderūn* compound may have a separate entrance from the street. Between the two compounds there may be a door, or in some cases only a curtain. All the most valuable possessions are kept in the *anderūn*, but the *birūn* is much better furnished, larger and more luxurious. Some of the women’s rooms are very small and mean, even in a large and rich house. Men and women receive their visitors only in their own apartments. When there are no strangers present, the men generally go for their meals to the *anderūn*.

Persian houses of medium size always give the idea of spaciousness. This is partly because they are built with summer and winter quarters. The sun must be avoided in the summer and taken advantage of in the winter. Nearly all houses have rooms on three, and sometimes on four, sides of the compound. Most of the rooms open on to a verandah, approached by steps. There are small windows and a great many doors, usually two-leaved, with fanlights over the top, filled with gaudy-coloured glass. Some houses have an upper storey at one end of the house, or a small room opening on to the roof.

The houses are chiefly built of mud, or sun-dried bricks, and timber. The latter is not sawn into planks, but the whole trees (generally plane-trees) are used for beams and supports. A well-finished house has all its walls plastered and whitened. Persians are very clever at

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plaster-work, and place imposing pillars with elaborate capitals along the verandahs.

A special feature of all Persian rooms is the use of *tākchahs*, or shelves, which are cut in the thick walls. They are in shape like windows, often arched at the top. They vary from six inches to two or three feet in depth. The usual height from the ground is about three feet, but others may be only three feet from the ceiling. A room may have one or two or, if large, a dozen of these useful *tākchahs*. Persians are very fond of filling them with lamps, clocks, vases, samovars, teapots, teacups or glasses. The more valuable things are put on the high *tākchahs*.

Some large and old houses have very finely carved wood window-frames filled with small panes of beautiful stained glass, but the art of making this glass has perished. These windows, or *urushis*, are very large, and often fill the end of a room, being usually broader than they are high. In these old houses elaborate decoration is found. The walls and ceiling of a room may be covered with pictures and small pieces of looking-glass. The pictures used are as a rule cheap oleographs of well-known European pictures, many copies of the same picture being used, and they and the mirrors are embedded in the plaster, which is often highly coloured. Some of the palaces have rooms called by such names as "the looking-glass house" and "the playhouse."

Blue tiles are used for the flooring of bathrooms and recesses, and for window-sills; and in kitchens and pantries there are tiled slabs which are very useful. Tanks are often lined with tiles and, when the water is clean, this is very effective. Various-coloured tiles are seen in the exterior decoration of houses and verandahs. Sometimes it may be only a simple line of blue and white, or yellow

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and black tiles; at others a whole façade may be tiled, and the effect in the brilliant sunshine is beautiful.

The furniture in a Persian house is conspicuous by its absence! Men who have come much in contact with Europeans may have a table and chairs in their guest-room, and some aspire to European bedsteads, but all these are more for ornament than use, as a house is properly furnished for a Persian when it is well carpeted and curtained, and has a good stock of bedding. The *tākchahs* take the place of cupboards and tables, the mattresses and pillows of couches and chairs. Wearing apparel, when not in use, is folded up in special wrappers, and kept either in a box or on a high *tākchah*. Labour and expense are saved by this style of furnishing. The proper arrangement of carpets is: first a thick matting which covers the mud or plaster floor, then a large carpet down the middle of the room, and narrow strips of carpet or felt down the sides and at the top of the room. The carpets sometimes have a cotton cover over them, blue or red, to preserve them. No one walks on a Persian carpet with shoes on; these are left at the door; and the constant walking in stockinged feet produces the silky appearance so desired and admired in Persian rugs. Instead of deteriorating with wear, they improve every year, and increase in value.

Generally speaking, rooms are not set apart as bedrooms. The bedding, which consists of mattresses and bolster-shaped pillows covered in gay print, and wadded quilts, is put out last thing at night, and then in the morning rolled up and put in an alcove or recess. The mattresses when used for sitting on during the day are placed against the wall. Rich and poor alike eat their meals sitting on the floor. A piece of coloured oilcloth, or a hand-printed cotton cloth, is placed on the floor, and

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on it is put the cooked food, which is brought in on a tray, and the people sit round this. Implements are seldom used, and plates are replaced by long thin cakes of bread. Large helpings of rice are put on this bread, pieces of which are torn off and dipped into the curry or stew, so that the plate is gradually eaten. Deep spoons take the place of individual tumblers. After the meal, water is poured over the hands. In a cottage the clay water-jar would be used for this; in a mansion rose-water would be poured from an elegant silver pitcher with a long spout, the hands being held over a basin to match, which has a grating over the top; in a house of intermediate style a tinned-copper water-jar would be used. A towel and soap are sometimes provided as well.

Tea is usually served on a small table, about a foot high. The samovar is brought in on a brass or copper tray, with a very small teapot on the top of the urn. Tea-glasses or tiny cups are used. As a rule Persians do not eat when they drink tea, but for European visitors they provide sponge cakes and biscuits, fruit and sweets.

Though many Persian rooms have fireplaces, fires are a luxury, except for the rich. A very economical and useful way of warming universally used is the *kursī*. For this a low square wood table is placed over an earthenware pan or metal brazier containing hot charcoal, and covered with a large and thick wadded quilt. Cushions are arranged round this, and people sit on these with their feet underneath the "table." The sense of warmth is delightful, and the sitters are very loath to leave it. In the cold weather every possible chance of sitting there is taken; meals are eaten there, and gossip and idleness are freely indulged in. A *kursī* is in fact commonly spoken of as a *tambal-khaneh*, or lazy-house. At night the bedding is placed round the *kursī*, and as soon as the

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evening meal is finished people go to sleep where they are. Accidents to small children often happen, as they may roll underneath and burn themselves on the hot charcoal.

The kitchen is the least attractive part of a Persian house. The first impression is that it is dark and dirty, and as different as possible from an English kitchen. There is seldom a window, the floor is of earth or brick, and the walls black from smoke. If there is an oven it will be a brick one, and there will be a fireplace made of two large stones with a big open flue above. On this fire an enormous copper pan is kept in which to boil water for general use, and, if the house is that of Europeans, for baths.

The cooking is done on what I can best describe as a broad tiled shelf. Alternate tiles are omitted and the squares fitted with iron sides to a depth of about six inches, with a grating at the bottom, below which there is an opening for a draught. In these tiny stoves, or *ujāks*, charcoal is burnt. This is an economical way of cooking, as two or three saucepans can be kept boiling on one *ujāk*, and more fires are quickly lighted if needed. A cake may be baked in this way instead of in the big brick oven. When the fire has almost burnt out and the stove is very hot, the remains of the charcoal are put on a tin lid; the cake in its tin is placed in the *ujāk* and covered with this lid.

Most houses have a so-called *kahvab-khaneh*, or coffee-house, or a *sherbet-khaneh*, or sherbet-house, in which the samovar and *kalyān* are prepared and washing up done.

With few exceptions, every house has a flight of steps leading to the roof. The roof is a very important part of the house. In the hot weather nearly everyone sleeps on the roof, the small compounds and badly

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ventilated rooms being unbearable. Wealthy people may have a kind of shelter, with very little in the way of walls, under which they have a mosquito net, or sometimes a large enclosure with roof and walls of muslin, inside which they sleep in comfort.

Houses in Yezd, which is known as the desert city, have underground rooms which people occupy in the daytime during the summer, when the heat elsewhere is unbearable. Many houses in Yezd also have wind towers to catch any breeze there may be in the upper air. These towers are like ventilating shafts, and very much add to the comfort of a house in the hot weather.

Persians are very fond of sitting out of doors, and the women do most of their work on the verandahs or in the compounds, but always with a locked door. Compounds are approached by a long passage, and when a knock is heard on the front door it is always answered by a loud, "Who is there?" and until this is satisfactorily answered the door is not opened. If the caller should prove to be for the master of the house, the fact is loudly proclaimed: "A man is coming, women away!" or something of the kind. A great deal of hurrying and scurrying and snatching up of chādars takes place, and the women are quickly indoors, but it is very certain that they are spying through the chinks in the door, or from behind a curtain, to see what manner of man the visitor is.

Persian houses may be made very comfortable for Europeans. They exactly suit the climate, and with a few alterations and adaptations nothing could be better suited to their needs. The compound of a house occupied by Europeans quickly takes on a cared-for air, seldom seen in one in native occupation.

The majority of houses have their own wells, often

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one in each compound, and an extra camel or ox well, which can be resorted to when the others get too low. Isfahān has very good wells, many of them ninety feet deep. A curious calling is that of the men who clean out the wells. Late in the summer, when the water is low, these men go down and scrape the accumulations of mud and other unnecessary things from the bottom of the well. A man may be under water for several minutes, and when he comes up he will lie shivering and gasping in the sun for some time, and then if the job is not finished he will go down the well again. Numbers of children fall down wells and it is wonderful how many of them survive it.

Houses in Persia are never spring-cleaned as they are at home; no scrubbing is ever done. When a room is cleaned, the carpet and matting are taken up, the mud or cement floor is brushed with a short palm-leaf brush, and then liberally watered. While it is wet the matting and carpets are put back, and after a little banging and flicking of the windows and *tākchahs* with a duster the cleaning is finished. Persians are great at watering the ground and fanning people, both lazy jobs, but very welcome on a hot afternoon.

Walls are not painted or papered, but are very well whitened, and finished either with a rough or smooth surface. Gaudy blue lines, or black or brown decorations, chiefly leaves and birds, supposed to be *bulbuls*, or nightingales, adorn many of the walls. Framed pictures are seldom seen, but I once stayed in a house belonging to a remarkable man—remarkable because his house and compound were absolutely tidy and in order. In the best living-room there were about thirty framed pictures, at least seventeen of them being of Queen Mary when Princess of Wales, and all exactly alike. The rest were



## Persian Houses

of King George and the Empress of Russia. The owner of the house said that he thought if you admired anyone very much, the more pictures you had of them the better—he had made all the frames himself. Persian ladies sometimes cover the walls of the *anderūn* with pictures cut from English and French illustrated papers, and find them a constant source of interest. A house matters far more to a Persian woman than to an Englishwoman, because she so seldom leaves it. Yet her ideas of making it comfortable are far removed from ours, for, after all, to her it is never more than a house, while to an Englishwoman it would be a home.

## CHAPTER XVI

### FOOD & SWEETS

**O**N my first journey through Persia it seemed to me that the food was dull and unappetizing and that eating would only be the servant of necessity. Twenty years' experience of cooks and food have proved these early impressions to be absolutely wrong. Persian food, whether the simple food of the peasant or the elaborately cooked meals of the wealthy, is all excellent. It is very different from English food, but much of its charm lies in this difference.

The bread made in the towns differs from that made in villages; the Armenians and the tribespeople also have varieties of their own. In times of scarcity barley bread is made, but the ordinary bread is made of wholemeal wheaten flour; it is leavened, and never made in loaves, but always in thin cakes or flaps. Some is as thin as paper, while village bread may be an inch thick. The latter is made in round cakes, from six to nine or ten inches across, while most kinds of town bread are made in long flaps, from one to two feet long. Men are often seen carrying the bread for their houses over or under their arms, as they might carry a coat. Most of the bread is baked in the large clay ovens which are like roughly shaped jars, while one kind is baked in a flat oven on a bed of pebbles. Both these ovens are heated with wood or other fuel, which is either withdrawn, or allowed to burn out, before the bread is put in. Many bakers

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sprinkle various kinds of seed on the bread before it is baked; poppy seed, a sort of caraway, and another small round seed are much used for this purpose.

The thick kinds of bread are eaten new, many people buying fresh bread for every meal, but the very thin bread is folded up and tied in a cloth and kept for a long time. It is often sprinkled with water and tied up again for a short time before being eaten.

The Armenians have a big baking every few weeks, when they have a professional baker, generally a woman, in for a day or two.

The shape of Persian bread lends itself to the requirements of the people. In the majority of houses individual plates are not used, a flap or cake of bread taking its place. Again, knives are not general, and thin bread is always broken, not cut. Another advantage is that much of the cooked food sold in the *bāzārs* is folded up in bread and nothing of its goodness is lost. Fuel is also economized in the baking, and when an oven is not available, it can very easily be cooked on a concave iron plate over a fire. A large proportion of bread is eaten compared with other food, the average allowance being twenty-eight ounces a head a day.

Though the Persians make butter, it is seldom eaten with bread, but is used freely in cooking. "Dry bread," which is like very hard, plain biscuit, sometimes sweet, and flavoured with ginger, and which, owing to the dry atmosphere, keeps crisp and fresh for a long time, is eaten dry with the early morning tea. As in most Eastern lands, the first meal of the day is a slight one, the midday meal is rather more substantial, and the evening meal is the one that really satisfies. With the working classes, unless there is food left over from dinner which can be eaten for lunch, bread is again the chief thing, but with a *khurish*,

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or relish. This may be milk, cheese, curdled milk, or fresh fruit, pickles, cooked beetroot, or turnips, or rice milk; these would all be bought ready cooked, or—and this specially in the winter—a very nice kind of sweet which is made of linseed, sugar and flavouring. It is cut in small diagonal pieces, and is considered nourishing as well as delicious, and well made it is certainly very good. The evening meal is generally a stew of some kind made of meat and vegetables; sometimes whole wheat is cooked with the meat; and grapes, small plums or small pieces of quince are often used instead of vegetables. If it can be afforded plainly boiled rice is eaten with this stew, but failing that it is again bread.

With the upper classes there is of course a greater variety of food, and much more of it is cooked at home. Both lunch and dinner are elaborate meals. I have been to lunch and dinner in Persian houses where a cook had been borrowed from a European house, and everything was served in courses, with all the proper table accessories. But the usual method is to have a cloth, white or coloured, spread on the carpet, and all the food brought in at once, with the exception of *kabobs*. These are very tender pieces of meat which are put on skewers, with bits of fat and onion between, and then grilled. Sometimes the meat is minced and pressed on to flat skewers. When the *kabobs* are cooked, some very pungent red spice is sprinkled over; then they are quickly folded in bread, brought in and handed to the guests.

The foundation of either meal will be bread and *chilau*, or plainly boiled rice. There may be a roast joint, there will certainly be chickens or partridges roasted or stewed, and a great variety of made dishes. Some of these are unique and delicious and may be of interest. The *pièce de résistance* is generally *fis-an-jun*. This looks like a

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very thick chocolate sauce with lumps in it, and surrounded with about an inch of yellow melted butter. It really is a sauce made of pounded walnuts, pomegranate juice, butter and syrup, in which cut-up chicken or partridge has been slowly cooked. I have more than once been asked for the recipe by English travellers. It, however, needs a Persian cook and Persian pomegranates if it is to be made to perfection: it is eaten with *chilau*. Another popular dish in the spring or early summer consists of a mixture of chopped meat and other ingredients folded up in young vine leaves and stewed. This has again a distinct and unusual flavour.

*Kishmish* or sultana *pilau* is a general favourite. In this cut-up meat or chicken is put among the plainly boiled rice on a large tray or dish, and on the top of it more rice is piled, which is mixed with a generous amount of onions and sultanas fried together.

Lentils are often cooked separately and mixed in with rice, also a green herb something like fennel. Sometimes the great trays or dishes of rice are ornamented with a few handfuls of rice which has been made a brilliant yellow with saffron; over this cut-up pistachio nuts and small pieces of lump sugar are sprinkled, and strips of almond stuck in all over as the finishing touch. Plates of fried eggs sprinkled with sugar, and a kind of omelette made of eggs mixed with a large quantity of chopped-up greens, such as onion-tops, parsley and spinach, and fried for a long time, are favourite dishes.

Puddings of any kind are rarely seen, though there is generally an effort at something in the way of a sweet if Europeans are invited. Pickles and other sour things are much preferred. Persians do not eat one thing at a time, but like a little bit of everything on their bread or plate.

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Persians seldom offer wine to guests, as it is forbidden to themselves. The drinks at a lunch or dinner are always sherbets. Sherbet is not an effervescing powder, but a thick syrup. There are several favourite kinds, quince and lemon, orange, lemon, and a most popular one made of sugar, vinegar and mint. These are bought from the makers in the bāzār. For a meal the sherbet is mixed with water and put in one or more large bowls, with carved wooden spoons with deep bowls floating on the top. Each guest takes a spoonful. Persians love iced drinks, but we avoid them if the ice is put into the bowl or glass. If it is in an outer receptacle it is safer, but even then, unless you know the people and their ideas of drinking water, it is better to drink tea.

Well-to-do people often have a fruit meal during the morning, when they consume what seems to us an immense quantity of melons and other fruit.

The chief drawback to native food is that it has so much fat in it. In cooking rice, after the water is strained off, the rice is put into another saucepan in which there is a quantity of melted fat or butter. This is gradually absorbed, and the rice at the bottom of the saucepan becomes hard and golden-brown; this is considered a tit-bit and is often served on the top of a tray or dish of rice.

Butchers cut up their meat very differently from the manner we are accustomed to, and it is impossible to get any regular joint of beef. The cook will buy a great lump to which it is difficult to give a name. Persians consider that beef is very inferior meat and only the poor eat it. Europeans often have it salted. Good veal can sometimes be had, but it is nearer cow than calf.

Goat meat is largely eaten, and will often be sold instead of mutton, unless the purchaser is wary. It is

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much coarser and drier than mutton. In some parts of the country goats thrive where the pasturage is insufficient for sheep.

Lambs are sometimes killed the day they are born, as the skins are then in perfection for the popular lamb-skin hats worn by wealthy men. The larger the lamb the coarser the curl, and the cheaper the skin. These tiny lambs are eaten, but are not satisfactory. However, both mutton and larger lamb are excellent. Persian sheep have fat tails which often weigh several pounds, and are sold, with other fat parts of the animal, at a much higher price than the meat. This is melted down and takes the place of dripping, lard and butter in the kitchen.

Fruits in Persia grow to perfection. There are many kinds of melons, including very fine water-melons, with green exteriors and orange interiors with black seeds. A melon may weigh twenty-five or twenty-six pounds; they are always sold by weight. It is usual to buy a donkey-load at a time, storing them in a cool place and eating them as they ripen.

Grapes are also very plentiful and of varied kinds. I was at a grape harvest once where in one vineyard there were more than a dozen different kinds of grapes.

Peaches, cherries, pears, apricots and dates reach perfection, while apples, figs and plums are less good. There are few fruits of the berry or currant type, but what there are, black and white mulberries, are most abundant. Where strawberries have been introduced—*e.g.* in Teheran—they do very well.

Nuts too are plentiful, especially walnuts, almonds, hazel nuts and pistachios. When the almonds are fully formed, but long before they are ripe, they are often cooked and eaten, hot or cold. They are boiled very

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carefully and then arranged on a dish like biscuits or cakes. If properly cooked they are very good, but this, again, is something out of the ordinary.

The makers of sweets and biscuits always seem busy, and at festive seasons, such as the New Year, or the month of fasting, when people fast by day and feast by night, they can hardly keep pace with their trade.

All the large sweet-shops make everything they sell, and almost any kind of sweet may be seen in course of making in the *bāzār*. Many sweet-makers have a sort of large kitchen with huge copper pans at the back of the shop. Perhaps the most universally popular sweet in Persia is *gaz*. This is made of manna, honey and pistachios. The best kinds are like nougat, pure white and very hard. It is made in round cakes about three inches across and half-an-inch thick and packed ten or twelve in a box, with flour in between. If brought to England it becomes soft and uneatable.

In many Armenian homes they make *gaz*, also a sweet made with pounded almond, sugar and saffron. Making *gaz* is somewhat of an art, and a professional sweet-maker comes to make it. In visiting at any festive season, almost the first thing after greetings have been exchanged is the breaking up of a cake of *gaz*. The host or hostess takes a piece in the left hand, and grasping another with the right, knocks its edge on to the middle of the other cake, which breaks into several pieces and is handed to the guests. A very superior kind is made in tiny individual cakes about an inch across.

Before the war and the tremendous rise in the price of sugar—it was five shillings a pound at one time—sweets were eaten like food in Persia. At Christmas-time, when we had visits of congratulation from hundreds of Persians, we arranged large trays each with six or eight dinner-



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plates on them, all piled up with a different kind of sweet. Every guest would take a small handful from each. Toffee, plain and nut, is made, fondants of all shapes, colours and sizes, Turkish delight, and many kinds of boiled sweets. The sweet-makers use white of egg very largely in their sweets and biscuits, and sell the egg-shells with the yolks. Another very popular sweet is a kind of candy which when it is still warm and pliable is thrown over a hook and pulled out. The process is repeated scores of times, until it is like spun silk. Another sweet suggests peppermint lumps, but is generally devoid of flavour. I once inspected the making of these in the little factory at the back of a sweet-shop. The mixture was rolled out with the hands into a long thick rope, which a man then snipped into pieces with a pair of scissors. These sweets are often decorated with gold-leaf for weddings. Many kinds of biscuits are made—almond macaroons, rice-flour, ginger and pea-flour biscuits being the most usual. Sponge cake is about the only kind of cake known to the people, but wedding cakes are gaining popularity among the Armenians, and cooks in European houses soon become very clever cake-makers. Persian ladies often make delicious sweets and biscuits in the *anderūn*. A very rich, thin pastry made in pieces about a foot long is called “elephants’ ears.” Some biscuits are made of batter; a very intricate tin mould is dipped into this and then into boiling fat. The result is a very crisp, rich star-shaped biscuit.

Though Persia is such a hot, thirsty land, the drinks are less distinctive than its foods. Sherbet has already been referred to, and next to it as a national drink comes tea—nothing can take the place of tea. All tea and sugar are imported, and so they are a luxury,



### A BREAD SHOP IN SHIRAZ.

Notice the piles of bread. The tall man on the right is the baker standing by the oven which is out of sight.

### ARMENIAN NUNS AT ST. KATHARINE'S CONVENT, JULFA.

Beating the board as a summons to worship is a relic of ancient times when there were no bells. The sounds are soft and musical and very much like bells.

### A QASHGAI BIBI

A wife of a Qashgai Chief. She is wearing seven skirts, each about sixteen yards round. Notice samovau and tea glass.

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but there are very few people who do not afford it. Tea is always served in very small cups or in tea-glasses, holding about half-a-teacupful. The tea should be weak, very hot and very sweet. In olden days the sugar sometimes could be seen, before it melted, above the tea. Lemon or lime-juice or hot milk is occasionally served with the tea. A very expensive kind of tea called "white tea," which only gives a pale straw-coloured liquid, is very much favoured by the rich. Unless you want to part company with sleep it is wiser not to drink it.

At a formal visit tea will be brought in three times, with smokes, *kalyān* or cigarettes in between. The third cup is a polite way of saying that it is time for the visitors to leave.

Very tiny cups of thick, sweet coffee are sometimes offered, and I have had both coffee and tea with crushed cardamoms in it. This is considered to be a very valuable pick-me-up after a long ride or walk. Villagers and tribes-people drink a great deal of *dūgh*. This is curdled milk mixed with water, to which pepper and salt and herbs have been added. It is rather like buttermilk and is said to be very refreshing.

Wine in Persia is chiefly made by Jews and Armenians. It is forbidden to the followers of the prophet, but this prohibition is not universally observed. A dark wine similar to port is made, also a golden wine akin to sherry, which is made chiefly in and around Shiraz; both these wines are sweet rather than dry. *Arak*, a very strong spirit, used both for drinking and burning, is made from the grapes after the juice is extracted for wine.

Children's food is not a specialized art as it is with us. A young baby will be given tiny spoonfuls of tea;

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when it has a few teeth it will be allowed to gnaw away at an unpeeled cucumber, and gradually it eats what the rest of the family eat. The mothers are very slow to perceive the advantage of taking trouble about a child's food. During a severe famine, when thousands were trying to live on root vegetables, the small children suffered dreadfully. The mothers could not feed them, and the babies could not live on raw carrots. I managed to get some fine barley flour, and mixed it with sugar, never of course telling the mothers what it was, as they think barley is the coarsest kind of food. I gave them tins of this, telling them how to make it, and it was wonderful how some of the poor little creatures throve on it.

Persia supplies herself with wheat, barley, rice, peas, beans and lentils, fruits, nuts, vegetables, meat and salt, poultry, milk and eggs, but for her other needs she must look to other countries.

In a Persian house the cook may be a man or woman, and will do all the shopping. Many articles of food cannot be bought ready for use. For instance, salt when bought looks like dirty washing soda; it must be pounded before use and the colour winked at. For table salt, crystals of rock salt are bought and pounded, the result being very good. The only kinds of sugar are lump sugar, sold in conical loaves which must be broken up, and granulated sugar. If a fine sugar is wanted, it again must be pounded. A mortar and pestle always seem in use in a Persian kitchen, spices, vegetables, dried bread-crumbs, coffee, salt and sugar, and bricks to make powder for knife and brass cleaning, all coming in for blows. Generally the mortar is a large stone one and the pestle of iron. There is something fascinating in the sound, and it also tells the character of the person

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wielding the pestle. The cooking pots are copper, and are tinned from time to time. Europeans insist on this being done about every three weeks, but the people of the country are often very careless about it, and suffer in consequence. Early one morning you will see the blackened kitchen utensils being carried away by a man and a scrap of a boy, and in the late afternoon you may see the same things coming back looking like silver. If you chance to pass through the neighbouring bāzār during the day, you may see the small boy bare-footed, standing in the largest pan, the one used for water, holding on to the bough of a tree or a post overhead, and swinging round. He thus polishes the pan with his feet previous to the tinning process. Instead of a mincing machine a huge curved knife is used. The point of the knife is held down with the left hand and the meat or vegetable is soon chopped.

Persians are very thrifty and there is little waste. Even such things as melon seeds and rinds, and pomegranate skins and fruit stones, are carefully kept and disposed of when occasion offers. The melon seeds and kernels are dried, roasted and eaten; the rind goes to feed a donkey, the pomegranate skins to make dye.

The last thing we shall consider is met with all over Persia, and that is *arjīl*. Every traveller carries it, and it always has a place among the sweets and biscuits offered to guests. It is a mixture of dried fruits and nuts—almonds, walnuts, hazels and pistachios, melon seeds, peas, raisins and sultanas being the usual mixture. It can be bought already mixed, or you can have what you like best put together. Personally I preferred the omission of melon seeds. The dryness of the air adds to the perfection of *arjīl*. If kept in a cotton bag

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through a month's journey, it will be as crisp and good at the end as at the beginning. But take it with you on the Caspian Sea or the Persian Gulf and it is almost uneatable; but for all that you look back upon it as one of the delights of Persia.

## CHAPTER XVII

### SHOPPING

**I**N Persia no one speaks of going to the shops or of going out shopping, but always of going to the *bāzār*, which is practically the market. There are often two or three shops together in the closely populated parts of the town, probably a baker, a grocer and a "coffee-shop." In the latter only tea and smokes are sold. These shops are called a *bāzārchēh*, or little *bāzār*, and are of great convenience to those who live near. People very often buy from them on the credit system, but instead of a weekly or monthly account being rendered, the customer has a stick of about a foot long, just a piece of fairly thick twig; this is taken each time a purchase is made, and a notch is cut in it by the shopkeeper; when the stick is covered with notches the score ought to be settled. But Persians hate parting with money, and every possible excuse may be brought forward for deferring the payment of what is owing.

The *bāzār* proper is very much like a number of covered-in lanes with vaulted roofs. In Teheran, Isfahān, Shiraz and other large cities they extend for miles; some of them are wide and straight, but many are very narrow and winding. They are cool in summer and warm in winter, and nearly always dark, which makes it very difficult to get good photographs. There are also open *bāzārs* in many places; in one of these in Isfahān a large market was held one day a week, and sometimes it was

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almost impossible to get through on account of the crowds. In this market there were a great many stalls where pottery, fruit, sweets, grain, etc., were sold, but the special feature which attracted so many sightseers, and a few purchasers, was the quantity of second-hand things which were for sale. Especially during a severe famine in 1917 and 1918 people were obliged to sell many of their possessions. Everything in the way of food was so scarce and expensive that people were forced to sell anything they could do without, and, of necessity, carpets, embroideries, vases, lamps and numbers of valuable antiques were sold for a mere song. Many of the vendors in this open bāzār are women; they sit on the ground in rows, in their black chādars and with their veils down, almost under the feet of horses and donkeys and men, with their goods for sale in front of them. One may recently have lost a child, and the little garments are for sale; another may have two or three old tea-glasses and saucers, a teapot, or a samovar which she wishes to dispose of, for anything she can get. Another woman may have some white cambric veils, of which she has worked the fine piece of embroidery for the eyes, and hemstitched the sides. Sometimes very pretty bits of china or embroidery may be picked up from these poor people, whom you feel must be brought to great need before they will come and suffer such indignities in order to exchange their perhaps most valued possessions for a few pence.

If a Persian man is buying he will seldom, if ever, give the price first asked, unless it is for anything with a fixed price, such as bread or sugar. Women, too, will bargain, but not so openly as men. Every seller wants to get the highest price, and every buyer would pay the lowest, and it generally ends in something midway



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between the two, the seller still declaring that he bought it for a much higher price, but that he is making a present of it, and the buyer declaring "it is naught, it is naught, but when he is gone his way, then he boasteth."

To a Persian the bāzār is the centre of all things. All news is given and received, and men and boys of all ages and classes talk their loudest and act as though no business but their own is of any account.

Time is at a discount, and as everybody's shop is his own, he can open and shut it whenever he likes. Sometimes there may be more than one man in a shop, but generally the owner runs it with the help of a small *shāgird*, or disciple. I have seen only one woman selling in a Persian shop. This was a shop for the sale of ready-made men's clothing, and she seemed to know more about the stock than did her son. She employed women to make the garments, and evidently kept the sale of them very much in her own hands.

In the larger bāzārs the roadway is wide enough for carriages and for laden beasts, but only here and there in the wider parts can carriages pass each other. All drivers and riders, and many pedestrians keep up a constant chorus of "Give Road!" "Mind your foot!" "Get out of the way, vegetable!" "Get out of the way, bundle!" "Give place, icy!" and so on. Strings of loaded camels are the most tiresome frequenters of the road. The stretch of their necks is so great, and their loads so heavy and bulky, that it is often wise to stand well against the side until they pass. They are tied together in strings of tens or twelves, and sometimes hundreds have to be passed. This is all right in the desert, but very different in the narrow and crowded bāzārs. When caravans arrive from the coast, they usually come

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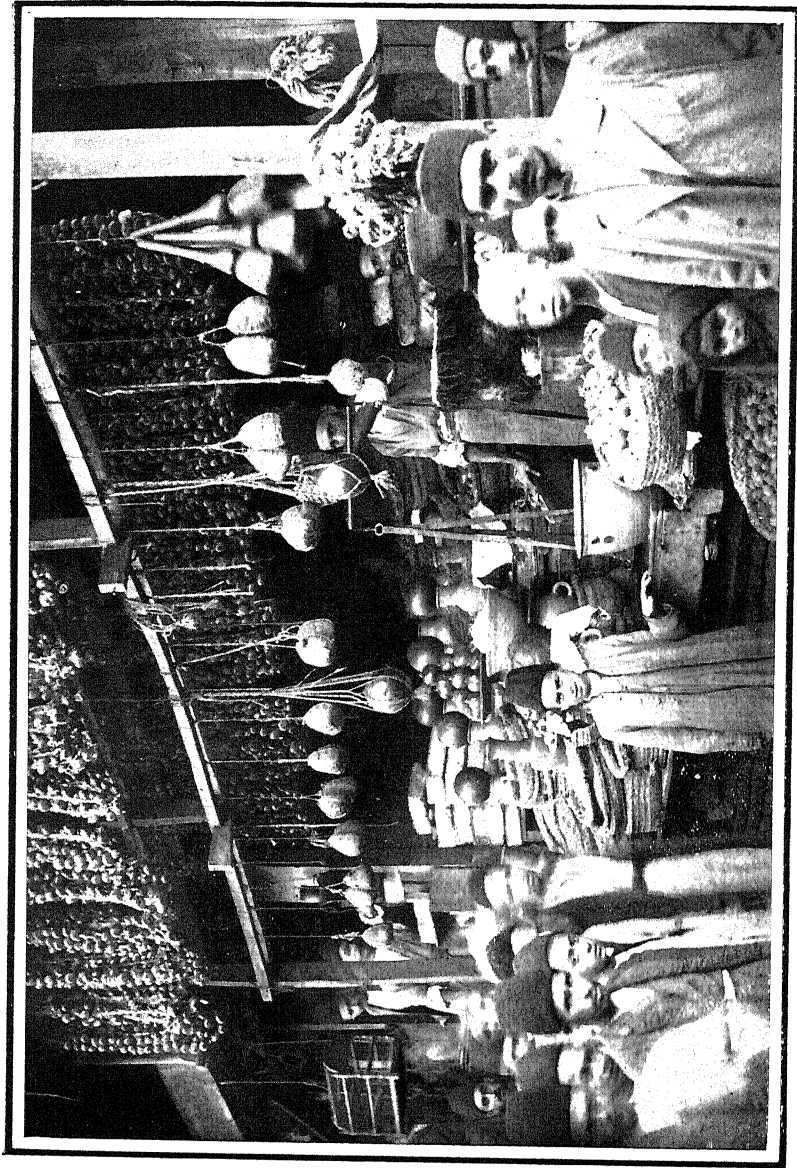
straight to the caravanserais, which, in the towns, can be approached only through the bāzār.

An English lady was once riding a small donkey through the Isfahān bāzār when she met a camel caravan. She pulled her donkey to the side and waited as camel after camel swung round a corner a few yards ahead. Presently one came carrying two very large boxes which filled the roadway, and which she felt must crush them. She reined her donkey up tightly, when he, with wonderful understanding of the situation, sank on the ground, and the huge load passed easily over their heads.

Shops of a kind are usually found together—*e.g.* the copper bāzār, where the brass and copper vessels are not only sold, but made. A first ride through a copper bāzār is an alarming experience, unless you have been told that your steed is accustomed to the din.

The shoemakers, the gold- and silver-smiths, the calico printers, the piece-goods merchants, and so on, each have their separate part of the bāzār. A great deal of cooked food is sold, and there are many shops for the sale of sweets and biscuits and dried fruits and nuts.

One strange feature of a Persian shop is that, except tea and a few small things, such as spices, and certain kinds of perishable sweets, nothing is wrapped up by the shopkeeper. Bags or handkerchiefs must be taken by the purchaser to bring away what he buys. The native generally carries a handkerchief, which he keeps in his pocket, never in his hand. If he goes as your servant when calling, he will with this carefully dust your shoes before you go in. As you come back, you may take a fancy to some biscuits or sweets; out again comes the treasured handkerchief, it is shaken and smoothed out, and your purchase is wrapped in it.



A FRUITERER'S SHOP IN RESHT.

Hanging up over the shop are strings of onions, melons are seen in string bags. At the right corner is a bunch of dried gourds, shaped while green so as tq form bowls for Kalyans. Nightingales are in the cage. The large basin in the front contains mast, or curdled milk.

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When you get home this is placed on the table with great pride. Finally it is given back to its owner and reverts to its original use.

The daily household shopping in Persia is done by the servants of the rich, and by the husbands or sons of the working classes. One of the most noticeable things in the bāzārs is that nearly all the shoppers are men. The countrymen who come to the towns often buy muslin chācats or shoes for their women, and it is a common cause of complaint that they will not take the trouble to buy shoes which fit the would-be wearers.

If a woman goes through the bāzār, she seldom goes alone. All townswomen go closely veiled, and from behind these veils they can see all that goes on, while they cannot be seen. They may shop on special occasions, such as the purchase of materials for a trousseau. Many of the shops frequented by them are in what are called caravanserais, large open squares, opening out of the bāzār. Here there are merchants who specially cater for women, and it is a common thing to see a carriage, sometimes with a eunuch on the box, draw up at the entrance to one of these caravanserais, where perhaps five or six women will get out, all of them pulling their veils closely down, and shrieking with laughter and excitement. They all quickly tumble into one of the shops, where they seat themselves on the floor, and discuss the merits of the various materials displayed. There are special patterns in muslins and silks, printed in Manchester and elsewhere for the Persian market, flowers on gay backgrounds, such as red rosebuds on a pink ground, or blue daisies on a yellow ground. There is no limit to the time spent in shopping expeditions of this kind.

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If the ladies do not find what they like in one shop, they will try another. There is a great deal of bargaining to be gone through, and often considerable difficulty when the payments have to be made. Sometimes pedlars, with large packs of dress-goods, come to the houses of the purchasers. These visits cause a great deal of fuss and fluster, and the women-servants have a busy time. The vendor will probably sit in the compound, while the ladies are in an inner room, and the bargaining will be carried on in loud tones.

In the principal towns there are European shops, also numbers of shops kept by Armenians. The latter are largely stocked with English tinned foods, such as sausages, sardines, jam, corn-flour, and cocoa, sweets and biscuits. The prices are generally very high, and it is remarkable how not only Europeans but Persians will pay these prices. Recently hardware and drapery, including materials, scarves, knitted coats, gloves, stockings and shoes, have been everywhere on sale. Not long ago in the East End of London I was asked by an assistant in an export house: "What colours do the Persians like best? We have a big order to send out — jumpers and coats—and we don't know their taste." I was able to tell him that pinks and blues and yellows would prove most attractive. It is surprising, too, to what a very large extent the native *bāzārs* are stocked with goods other than Persian. At one time large quantities of glass and china were imported from Russia; during the war matches, stationery, thermos flasks and other things from Japan. Many things also come from America, and came in the past from Germany, while England supplies most of the piece-goods, hardware, drugs and raw materials; and India, tea, sugar, coffee, candles and spices. An immense variety of things can

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be bought in a Persian bāzār, either new or second-hand, but shopping is as much an art in the East as in the West. In the East time and patience are essential, and a foreigner will do much better to have a native to bargain for him.

## CHAPTER XVIII

### OCCUPATIONS & AMUSEMENTS

FROM the chapters on Persian women, their houses and clothes, it will be evident that they are not overworked. Except with the poor, the complaint can never be made by a Persian woman that she has too much to do. To have too little to do is to my mind a far greater hardship than to have too much. Especially is this the case with the women of whom we are thinking. Leisure is not used by them for reading or for art, for charity or for public works. It means that their lives, apart from their houses and children and their personal needs, are very empty ones. A Persian house could never entail the labour and thought which the simplest English house necessitates. There are no steps or brasses to be cleaned each morning, no grates to polish, no fires to light, no shoes to clean, no polished halls or surroundings of rooms to be kept nice, no kitchen to be kept bright and cosy. Everyone leaves his or her shoes outside the door of a room. There are no bedrooms to be kept clean and tidy, and there is no bed or house linen to be laundered. One cooked meal daily is usual; for the rest, merely the samovar to prepare. Any washing of clothes is done outside in a stream; the family all go to the public bath. At meal-times few utensils are used. When it comes to turning out a room, there are no boards or paint to scrub, and the operation is a very simple one. Most Persian cleaning consists of sweeping and watering,

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and the men do more of this than the women. On the other hand, many things are done at home which English people never expect to do. Grain must be cleaned after it is bought, sugar broken up, coffee, salt and spices pounded. In many houses bread is made at home. Few ready-made clothes are to be bought, hence a good deal of sewing must also be done.

But you may say children take up a great deal of time in a woman's life. They may do, when they are really nurtured and trained. Persian children to a great extent bring themselves up. There are no regular feeding-times, no fixed sleeping-times; they get up and go to bed when their elders do. Their clothes are seldom changed, nor are they washed except on the visits to the public bath. Nothing is done to amuse a child. Perhaps the tendency with us is to do too much for our children; the Persians certainly go to the other extreme.

Let us think now how the women *do* spend their days and weeks. They go out very little, some of them scarcely ever. They are not energetic, and running about their houses and compounds and trying to make work is unknown. No, when they have done the necessary minimum, they sit down, and if there is anyone else there they talk! Gossip is very dear to a Persian woman. Topics of general interest are few and far between; hardly any women can read, and newspapers are not general, so their conversation becomes gossip pure and simple. It is largely about marriages and children, about husbands and food. Persian women are seldom alone. In a big house there are many women of the family, and servants. A small house often consists of one or two rooms, several families and several such houses being in one compound. The uninvited visitors in a house are many; especially is this the case in the winter, when



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women love to sit round the *kursī* and gossip. The *kalyān* is an accompaniment to the gossip, only the tongue of the woman who is drawing its fragrant whiffs must rest; the others talk more loudly than usual, so as to be heard above the hubble-bubble of the smoke through the water.

Rich ladies often make sweetmeats themselves, and very much enjoy eating them. Some are constantly eating nuts and melon seeds. And of course the inevitable glass of tea is always there. The teapot is often kept on the *mangāl*, or brazier, for hours, and the longer the tea has stewed the better it appears to be liked.

Music as we understand it does not appeal to Persian women, but they have their own kind of music which they like. A few rich people have pianos or harmoniums, and a good many play the *tar*. But music in general is not popular, as it is often associated with what is evil. On festive occasions professional dancing women are hired, who are notoriously women of loose character. The shrill voices and unmusical cadences of these women, and their often unseemly movements, grate on Western eyes and ears, but the natives think that their performances are wonderful.

I have always found Persian ladies interested in our music, and delighted with very small efforts on a harmonium or American organ. They particularly like constant repetition of a few bars containing a lively air. The hymn-singing in a mission church is a great attraction, especially when they realize that the words are Persian, and their delight is great if they can follow them in large-type lithographed hymn-books. It is a common thing for several women to come up to the organist at the close of a service and ask her to play some hymn or voluntary over again.

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Gramophones are now often heard in the coffee-shops, and wealthy people have their own, with which they like to entertain their guests, but I have found such entertainments trying in the extreme. The last house we lived in, in Isfahān, was separated by only a garden or two from the beautiful thoroughfare of the Chah Bagh. This is a very popular promenade, all the promenaders being men; but then almost all the visible side of Persian life is masculine; the women are there, but invisible. On this boulevard there are numbers of large coffee-shops, several of which attract their customers by gramophones. From our garden we could hear these distinctly; most of the records were Persian, some songs of doubtful character, others laughing songs and band music. After a week or two of this daily entertainment it would stop completely, and on inquiring the reason for this merciful cessation we should be told that the mullās had stopped it, as they consider music a very bad and immoral thing.

A phonograph was once in constant use in the house of a Bakhtiari khān. He was detained in Teheran for some months, so to cheer his wives and family he had some records made of his own speeches and conversation, and sent them with a phonograph so that they might be cheered by hearing his voice.

Persian ladies are very fond of entertaining their friends. If they can get one or two European ladies at such entertainments they are looked upon as a great asset. Tea is the usual meal to which people are asked, but lunch and dinner parties are also given. Everything takes place in the *anderūn*, but I have been at lunches where the principal after-entertainment has been to inspect the men's apartments and the garden, special arrangements having been made that all men should be off the premises.

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Ladies have often complained to me of the dullness of their own entertainments. Nothing but drinking tea and eating sweets and nuts, and smoking the *kalyān*, and gossip! The younger women and girls are expected to be very demure, and to listen to rather than join in the conversation.

There is a great deal of rivalry in their own dress and in that of their servants and slaves, whose clothes they supply. A lady may go to a party wearing a new and rather gorgeous dress or *chādar*, of which she is very evidently proud and conscious. A fellow-guest who owes her a grudge will send someone to search the *bāzār* the next day for material of the same kind. Then she will arrange a party, ask the specially grandly dressed lady to come, and array one of her slave-women in garments made of the same material, and enjoy the agitation of her guest.

Visits to the *hammam*, or public bath, are among the most exciting happenings in the lives of Persian women of all classes. Besides the regular weekly or monthly visits, there are the special occasions on which they go, the chief of these being before betrothals or weddings, and in preparation for the New Year festival. Sea bathing with us is often a merry proceeding, but the visit to a Persian bath is every bit as hilarious an occasion. I should even be inclined to say more so, from the fact that the lives of Persian women are so dull that any change is welcomed; it is, too, an opportunity of meeting friends and of animated gossip, and it does not last half-an-hour, but the best part of a day!

Rich people have proper *hammams* in their own compounds. Even with these people the day of the bath is an exciting one. To heat the water a great deal of fuel is required, and a daily bath is an unknown luxury.



#### A DRAPER'S SHOP IN SHIRAZ.

Customers examine the goods from below. Nothing in a shop like this will be wrapped up when bought, merely folded diagonally.

#### A PERSIAN FAMILY SCENE.

The hammock cradle is slung by ropes, with rings on the ends, to hooks on adjoining walls. These nanis are made of carpet and leather, sometimes also velvet, and are given by the husband's mother.

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Perhaps once a week the furnace is lighted and all the women and children of the house go together. They will probably spend several hours there, first in the outer room, then in the hot room, and last in the cooling room. There will be a great deal of noise and merriment. After they vacate the bath, the furnace will be fired again and things made ready for the men of the house.

But private baths are found only in the houses of the rich; the rest of the people go to the public baths. Few people afford this luxury every week, many only go once a month. The cost is not great, a few pence entrance, something for henna and soap and the bath attendant. Still, Persians are thrifty people and do not spend money unnecessarily, at all events not on baths! Most villages have public baths, and each quarter of a town has one or more. They may be recognized in various ways. A large crude painting of the Persian symbol, the lion and the sun, may be over the door, or some other extraordinary picture of the chase, or horsemen or lions; but every picture needs a label! Another sign of a public bath is the strange style of building. All that can be seen from outside, except the entrance, is the roof, and this consists of several sections, rather like plum puddings, with a large glass bottle or other piece of thick glass as a skylight on the top of each. A long row of what look like small haystacks may be seen approaching the bath; on closer inspection these prove to be loads of desert thorn on the backs of the tiniest donkeys. This thorn is used for heating the bath, and when the water is hot enough the fact is announced by the blowing of a horn. Another indication of the place being a bath is the sight of a man clad in a bath-towel and sitting about at the entrance; he is the bath attendant when it is open to men. A common way of showing that the

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bath is closed, perhaps for the rare occasion on which the water is changed, or for some other reason, is that the bath-towels festoon the streets or bāzār. These towels are thin cotton material, generally red with a blue and yellow check. They very quickly lose their colour from exposure to the sun. In England we should look upon these towels as quite pretty Eastern draperies. Persians return the compliment by using our Turkish bath-towels as afternoon tea-cloths!

I have been inside several private baths, but only one public one. I was passing late in the afternoon, when most of the women had gone, and before it was open to men, so asked if I might *tamāshāb* the *hammam*. The attendant was very friendly and quite willing for me to do so. If I had wanted a bath the matter would have been different. No infidel is allowed in a public bath, and it is one of the great difficulties for those who become Christians, as they are forbidden the use of the public bath. This takes away from a Persian one of the greatest joys of life, and it is difficult for them to make any other arrangements for their ablutions. I have known Armenian servants on a journey to go two or three months without a bath, as they would not be allowed, on any account, to go to the Persian bath in any town or village through which their journey took them.

Granted that you are a privileged person, a Persian and a Moslem, and you want a bath: you generally make up a party of friends and relatives, you take your clean clothes in a bundle and some lunch in a handkerchief, and start as early as you can in the morning for the bath. When you get there you traverse various passages and at last find yourself in a spacious place, under one of the plum-pudding roofs. The light is not bright, but as your eyes get accustomed to it, it is sufficient. The walls are

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tilled often and the floor is made of big slabs of stone. There are several small tanks in this room. Here you undress and generally play about; then you go into another apartment where the water is warm, and at last into one where it is hot. Few English people could bear the temperature of either this room or its hot tank. You stay here a long time, and then go back to the cooler room, and so to the first room you entered. Now you have lunch and drink tea and smoke the *kalyān*. After this you find people ready to offer you their services as manicurists, chiropodists, and hair dyers and dressers. As the day goes on the numbers of bathers increase rapidly, as does the steam and the noise. Children of all ages shout and scream, everybody talks in a loud voice, and few people leave a bath altogether the better for it. They come back looking very nice, with clean glossy black hair, newly dyed if necessary, waved and plaited, hands and feet and nails dyed with henna, clean clothes from top to toe, and altogether looking smart and nice. But either headaches from the noise, or colds or chills from the steam and overheating of the *hammam*, and in the winter from coming out into the cold air, seem everybody's portion. It is quite a usual thing to go to the bath after an infectious disease; some of the germs are boiled, but a great many are still active, and many diseases are passed on by these baths. The time when the *hammams* are most popular and busy is just before the New Year. They are then open night and day—by day for women and by night for men—and are often made attractive by the presence of musicians and dancing boys.

When patients are not too ill it is a rule at the English hospitals to insist on their having a bath before admission. An ordinary bath is provided in the hospital, but scarcely anyone likes it; they say they are sure to catch cold or

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something of the sort, and, when possible, get permission to go out to the public *hammam*.

To the mind of a Persian a garden is nearer to Paradise than anything else he knows. This is not very far from our idea that we are "nearer to God in a garden than anywhere else on earth."

To a Persian, Heaven or Paradise is a garden, and we can easily see how attractive water, shade and fruit would be to the desert-dwelling Arab. Leaving the antitype, let us picture a Persian garden. Three things are essential: the shade of trees, running water, and some raised wooden or mud platforms for sitting or sleeping on. Without these the most beautiful flower garden would count for nothing, but with them "a garden is a lovesome thing." All gardens are surrounded by high mud walls. Many gardens are very large and some quite small, but an average one would be about two acres in extent, longer than it is wide, with a central and side paths and sometimes diagonal ones. These paths thread their way through undergrowth, or, in a well-kept garden, through trees of many kinds. The trees may be carefully planted in rows, or at haphazard. Some gardens are really orchards, with quince, apple, pear, cherry, plum, peach and apricot trees. Others may have chiefly almond-trees, or pomegranates, or trees to be turned into timber, such as poplars and tall plane-trees along the sides, and perhaps a clump of the latter in the middle to give the desired shade. Judas-trees are often seen and are very beautiful when in bloom. In almost every garden there is a house at one side or end; it may be like a bandstand or a tower or a bungalow, or really a fine house. In front of this there will be a tank and gay flower-beds; petunias, verbena and stocks being the most usual flowers. Farther back, or away in the heart of the garden, will be numbers



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of rose bushes in which nightingales love to sing. There are no lawns in Persian gardens, but large spaces are often given up to crops of barley or wheat, which in the spring make vivid bits of colour.

There is generally a gardener and his family living in a small house by the entrance door, and the owners of the garden come and go as fancy takes them. A stay of a day, a few days, or even a few weeks, at a time makes a delightful change, especially to the women and children, from the cramped life in the town house and compound. Many cities have miles of gardens round them, and everyone who can possesses a garden. If the owner is able to employ a gardener, he does not seem to be very particular as to what work the man does, or how he keeps the garden; he must be there, and must see to the water supply, and from time to time bring the produce of the garden to his master's town house. Persian gentlemen are quite content to gather their friends round them in a garden and offer them the simple hospitality which it affords. The atmosphere of a garden seems specially conducive to the long philosophic and religious discussions so beloved by the men.

I have often been asked to visit ladies who have been spending a few days in their own or someone else's garden. When they are there the men are elsewhere. They, like the men, spend most of the time sitting in the shade by the stream, and carry on the same sort of life they lead in their own houses. While the men discuss, the women gossip. Most people keep a few necessary things in their garden houses, and if alone live very simply. But if they are making a long stay, or are having visitors, a great many things, such as lamps and glass and china, are brought out on round wooden

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trays on the heads of tray-carriers. It is wonderful to see these men arriving with their loads. The trays are often three feet across and have a ledge of only a couple of inches high round the edge. On these trays valuable glass and china are carried three or four miles with the greatest ease. Most of the gardens contain fruit and cucumbers, so that tea and a few sweets or biscuits are all that is needed for entertaining guests. Very picturesque these ladies look in their gay costumes in the setting of some of their lovely gardens. I think one of the most attractive traits in the people of Persia is their love of gardens. Many people who have been in contact with Westerners have ambitious ideas, and take much more trouble in the growth of flowers. With Persia's wonderful soil and sunshine, nothing is needed to produce the finest flowers except good seed or plants, water and a small amount of labour. In some gardens a wealth of Gloire de Dijon roses rewards the gardener, in others a blaze of cosmos and other light and fairy-like flowers which grow in the greatest profusion.

Thousands of Persia's people love gardens but possess none of their own. There are no parks or woods to which they can go, but many people in the spring go out and sit in the fields, where the crops are green and the mulberry-trees show promise of fruit. Some, and especially parties of women and children, ask permission to go into other people's gardens. At one time we lived in a house outside the city of Shiraz which had a lovely old garden—a garden that was veritably “The home of the nightingale and the rose.” It was a common thing for people to come and ask if they might spend the day in the garden, and we were only too glad to allow them to do so. They would come carrying a samovar and teapot, a *kalyān*, a large bundle of lettuces

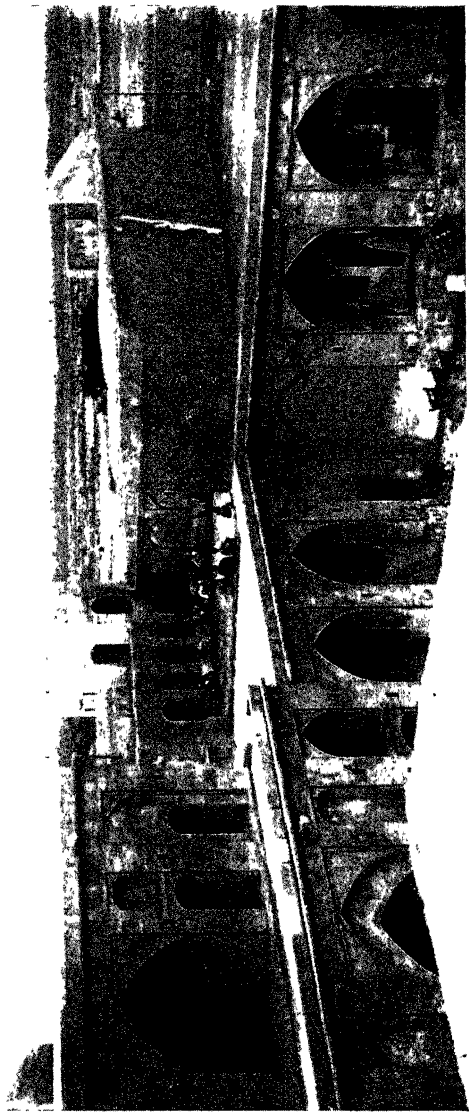


## CHAPTER XIX.

### TRAVELLING

**I**T is amusing when people in England talk of "long journeys," journeys which may take from ten in the morning till five in the afternoon, as though such were a tremendous undertaking! I should like them to try a Persian journey, which for length and slowness and difficulties and delays it would be difficult to surpass. If journeys in the land of the Shah appear as irksome to the natives as they do to us, it may be asked, Why does a Persian travel? Certainly not for pleasure. Most of those who travel are on business, either the business of the road, or the business to be transacted at the destination. The others who travel are pilgrims going to a sacred city or a shrine, or sick people going to a hospital. From this it can be seen that a great many people never leave their own town or village. The proportion of women who travel is very small. A few may accompany their husbands if business necessitates a change of residence, and very rarely a woman may be taken on a visit to relatives at a distance, or, if ill, to a foreign hospital. The majority of women who undertake a journey are going on pilgrimage. They may be the best part of a year going to and from Mecca or Kerbela, Kum or Meshed, from distant parts of Persia.

Persians say that haste is of the devil, and this probably accounts to some extent for their roads and methods of transit. To the Oriental a road is supposed



CORNER OF CARAVANSERAI, BORASJUN, SOUTH PERSIA.

This is one of the finest Persian Caravanserais, or "inns of the East." On the roof there is a *khatah*, or place of retreat, where a number of men are sitting. A woman and several *palakis* may be seen below.

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to imply a great deal, and to be worthy of it. But Persian roads leave very much to be desired, and haste in traversing them would surely spell disaster. They are stony, dusty or muddy, according to the district or season. But nothing is done by halves. If there are stones, you might imagine that an army had been at work scattering all sizes by thousands over the roads. If there is dust, there certainly is plenty of it, and it is of that pulverized variety which penetrates and clings to everything you wear; in some places it may be inches deep, and the result of a flock of sheep or a caravan making its way over the dust-covered road is to raise a substantial cloud which can both be seen, smelt and tasted. As for the mud, it is formed of this same pulverized dust, and anything more trying as an obstacle to progress I do not know. Mountain roads are often deep in snow; there are strong periodic winds which blow with great force; heavy rain and hail may be encountered, and scorching heat and blazing sunshine. And to meet all these difficulties there are nothing but primitive modes of travel. At least until 1914 there were less than a dozen miles of railway in Persia's nearly three-quarters of a million square miles. During the war a few light railways were put up, and motor transport was introduced.

Let us investigate a few of the really Persian methods of travel. First in importance I must put the humble and ubiquitous donkey. Small grey donkeys are very good goers and comfortable to ride, and you have not very far to fall if you do lose your seat. If a Persian woman rides one, she sits astride on the top of a load, or on a proper riding saddle, which is broad and flat, has a gay saddle-cloth hanging over it, and then a round thin cushion filled with cotton-wool strapped over the

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top. There are a great many large white donkeys, which are used both for merchandise and for riding. Some of them are beautiful animals, and are taught to amble. Mullās often ride these donkeys, as do women of position. "They that ride on white asses" seems to be a mark of distinction. But it would be considered *infra dig.* for an Englishman to ride a donkey, though quite correct for an Englishwoman. Next in size and number come mules. The majority of caravan animals are mules. Many of them are splendid beasts, very strong and sure-footed, seeing almost as well by night as by day. They are quite as obstinate as donkeys, if not a little more so. They like to walk on the extreme edge of a road overhanging a precipice, to walk a few steps and trot a few steps, shaking the rider up unmercifully. It is almost impossible to separate a riding mule from the other caravan animals; they like to share in the general jingle and dust of the caravan; they object to English saddles, and in many other ways they are tiresome beasts to ride, yet their good points outweigh their bad ones. Ponies are much used; those which may be hired for journeys are generally very thin, bony animals, but with a good deal of staying power, and their movements are decidedly more comfortable than those of a mule or donkey. In Persia camels are seldom ridden, but are used very largely for loads.

A great many people who go on journeys are either too young or feeble, or ill, or lazy, to ride an animal, so there are special conveyances for them. The first is a *kajāveh*, or a thing which hangs crooked; these are always used in pairs, which are roped together and put over a mule's back. They are something like dog-kennels or panniers made of wood. The traveller's bedding is generally put in for sitting on. The movement is not

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disagreeable, and children very quickly go to sleep as a result of the swaying motion. It is delightful when going over stony or rocky ground to experience no bumps, as there are no wheels, but it is trying if one passenger weighs more than the other, and one *kajāveh* is down and the other is up in the air. The muleteer without any warning will come behind and hitch one up and the other down. If they persistently go wrong, something heavy from a load, such as cooking pots, will be put into the light side, or stones will be used, to balance the two.

Sometimes *kajāvehs* are covered over the top for protection from sun or rain, but this makes them very heavy. Double hire is always charged for carrying them, as two mules are supposed to be provided, though they seldom are. Sometimes ponies carry them, but a mule is the proper beast. Small panniers are made for donkeys, in which children travel; or fruit, especially grapes, may be carried.

But the first-class carriage of Persia is the *takht-a-ravan*, or running throne. This is a long, box-shaped affair in which it is possible to lie down. It has a door and windows, and shafts at either end in which mules are fastened. From the nose of one mule to the tail of the other the length is at least twenty feet. There is great difficulty in turning corners, and some people object very strongly to the motion. It is not slung from, but fixed on, the shafts which are under the *takht*, and the mules seldom walk in step! For this the hire of four mules is charged. Only wealthy people possess them. A lady once lent me one for a journey of about sixty miles. I found it very comfortable, but neither my nurse nor little daughter could endure it for more than a few minutes at a time.



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Another time-honoured vehicle is a diligence—this is an extraordinarily heavy, clumsily made sort of old-fashioned market omnibus. The baggage is carried on the roof, and the inside is divided into two compartments, either for master and servants, or for men and women. It has no springs, and is drawn by four horses abreast, which, with their driver, are changed every ten or twelve miles. Large open, springless carts, or *garis*, are also used for journeys. The post is carried by *gari*; the mail-bags are put at the bottom, then the passengers' luggage, then any bedding which they may happen to possess, and on the top of this sit a dozen or more passengers! A more recent and comfortable vehicle is a carriage. There are now a great number in Persia, most wealthy people having their own, and there are besides public ones for hire. On a journey these also are drawn by four horses abreast. The baggage is tied on at the back, and often falls off and is lost. Some of these carriages have been brought from Russia or elsewhere, but many are now made in the country. They have iron-bound wheels, and sometimes wooden shutters instead of windows. These if put down will not come up, and if up will not go down. The door if shut will not open, and if open will not shut without a kick from the outside! The atmosphere is so dry that wood warps and shrinks very quickly. It is a common thing when passing a stream for the driver to get down and pour a bucket of water over each wheel.

The latest and best way of getting about in Persia is by motor car, and a journey which by *kajāvehs* or riding would take a fortnight of hard travelling can be comfortably done in two and a half days. I have tried all these modes of travel, and hope if ever I visit the land of the Shah again I shall be able to get about

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by car. Time is too precious to spend a day doing twenty or twenty-five miles, for this is all that caravan animals can do, yet it enables you to see the country, and a side of its life which you could never know if you rushed through it at fifty miles an hour.

The caravan routes are busy thoroughfares, thousands of laden animals passing in a day. The tracks which were good enough for caravan animals were very rough for wheeled traffic. Some improvement has been made on the main roads, and they are now, generally speaking, possible for motor traffic. But it sometimes happens that a car may sink into mud, and two or three days may elapse before it can be extricated. Each improvement in vehicles necessitates improvement in the roads. The troops did a great deal during the war to improve and widen roads. For instance, the journey between Bushire and Shiraz used to take ten days riding, or in *kajāvehs*. Several mountain ranges had to be crossed, and the roads were cruel in the extreme. One pass is called "The Old Woman," and another, which is worse, "The Daughter," and another is "The Cursed One." Well, over this dreadful track a good motor road has been made, and when cars are available, and there are not too many robbers about, the journey is easily done in two days, or by aeroplane in an hour and a half!

Many of Persia's roads consist of a number of narrow tracks which run side by side. These have been made by the feet of the animals which have traversed them through the centuries. Very few of them are straight, and it is odd to see hundreds of loaded mules or donkeys following exactly behind each other on these parallel and irregular desert tracks.

Very important questions regarding a journey which may last for days or even weeks or months are: Where

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will the nights be spent? and, Where will it be possible to get provisions? Some of Persia's kings and benefactors have built caravanserais for travellers. These are the inns of the East where any traveller may claim shelter. There is not much more to be offered, unless the keeper of the caravanserai sells bread and tea and smokes. Many of these inns are very large and have most imposing fronts. They are all open squares with small rooms opening on to verandahs built round the square. Behind these rooms there are enormous stables, and in the centre of the open square there are platforms on which the animals' loads may be piled up. The rooms seldom have either door or window or fireplace. Fires are often made on the floor, consequently the walls and ceilings are black. There is, of course, no furniture; people bring their bedding and anything else they may need. There are large stretches of roof over the stables and rooms, and in the hot weather travellers often spend their time there. Besides these caravanserais there are post-houses on all the main roads. These are quieter places, as no caravans can be taken in, but there is often only one room available for travellers.

The season of the year and the method of travelling make a great difference as to the time of the day for moving on or for resting. If it is only a caravan of merchandise, the muleteers generally prefer to travel by night, unless the country is in a disturbed condition. But for ordinary travellers, as caravan animals may take nine or ten hours to do twenty-five miles, a very early start in the morning is better, just before daybreak, so that they can get to their next stopping-place before the heat of the early afternoon. If travelling by carriage or diligence or *gari*, it is usual to go on whenever fresh horses are available. Sleeping in these jolting

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vehicles is very tiring, and travellers are often thankful to get out and lie down for even three or four hours. In the north of Persia there are a number of so-called *rest-houses* attached to the post-houses where the horses are changed. Here beds are offered. Sometimes they are merely old iron bedsteads with laths and perhaps a dirty old mattress. You must indeed be very weary to think of *resting* on these.

I do not know anyone who looks more uncomfortable on a journey than a Persian woman. She gets very tired of riding or driving, to which she may be quite unaccustomed. When she gets to a post-house or caravanserai she must shuffle about as completely veiled as if she were in a town. If she is travelling with her husband or son she must wait until he has got all he wants before anything will be done for her. The most important thing to a Persian on the road is a glass of tea. There are numbers of tea-shops, where it is possible to buy it, also the privilege of smoking a *kalyān*. If a woman indulges in these, by the way, she will sit outside, and probably round a corner.

Villages are generally at a good distance from the caravan roads and stopping-places. They are on this account safer from robbers, and also from exorbitant demands from big men, before whom the villagers would be helpless.

Very few women are seen at any of the stopping-places; occasionally one may perhaps be seen bringing eggs or bread or curdled milk to sell to the proprietor of the little tea-shop. Figures are difficult things, but I do not think more than one woman would be met with on a Persian journey for every hundred men on the road.

These caravan routes are sometimes enlivened by the presence of large parties of tribespeople or Ilyāts, who

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are changing their quarters in spring or autumn. Then there are plenty of women in evidence, and women with unveiled faces riding on the best mares the tribe possesses. But these women, as has been seen, occupy a much more honourable place in the society of their tribe than do other Persian women. These people are very different from the uniform caravans, most of which consist of animals of a kind with generally similar loads. The tribespeople are moving all their household goods, children, tents, flocks and herds. In the spring they will have a great many young things; tiny donkeys and calves may be seen peeping out of saddle-bags on the back of a cow, with a bunch of cocks and hens on the top. Lambs and kids will be carried in the same way, and numbers of foals will be running by the sides of the mares. These people are very friendly, and will sometimes bring curdled milk or bread to travellers they may meet. Some, however, hesitate to give or sell to foreigners, as they fear that it will bring evil to them; for instance, the cow that gave the milk, or the hen that laid the egg which is eaten by the unbeliever, may die. It is very sad to see the poor old women, who are no longer any use to the tribe, struggling along more dead than alive. If there are any sick people they will be sure to ask for medicine, if the travellers are Europeans.

Pilgrims are often met with on the road; they carry tattered banners, and if they are nearing their destination friends and acquaintances come out to meet them.

Many caravans are headed by a pony or mule with two strange-looking hands made of tin or wood, sometimes painted or gilt, which are fastened to long poles and stick out over the top of the load. These are supposed to be the hands of Ali, and to show that the caravan is

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under his special protection. Anyone who robs it is robbing him, and robbers generally refrain.

Most Persian roads are infested with highwaymen, and many are the travellers and caravans who are relieved of their possessions. This robbing is looked upon as an honourable calling, and not one of which its followers are in any way ashamed.

## CHAPTER XX

### INDUSTRIES

**W**HEN we speak of industries and Persian women we have to rule out a great deal which in the West seems natural.

In the first place, there is no demand for many things which are made by women. For instance, there are no milliners, because hats are not worn; no fur-workers or coat-makers, for the same reason. Fashions change very seldom, and women have very few clothes compared with what we consider necessary, and the majority of these they make themselves. Next, there are no large factories or mills as there are in other countries; if women work, it is more often than not in their own houses. There are very few fancy things made or used in Persia, as there are with us; and nearly all gloves and stockings are either hand-knitted or imported. In recent years stocking machines have been introduced. Most trades are in the hands of men, such as pottery-making, calico-printing, felt-hat making, brass and silver engraving, sweet-making and confectionery. All shops are kept by men.

There are practically no professions open to women. Art, music and literature may be said to be closed doors to them. Few teach, and fewer still take up any philanthropic work. As there are so many things that they do not do, it may be asked, What is there that they can do?

When it is remembered how few women and girls are

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educated, it can be inferred that all occupations followed by them call for hand-work rather than brain-work.

More women and girls are employed in needlecraft than in anything else. Many are ordinary seamstresses, who make men's shirts and loose trousers and women's clothing, none of which needs the skill of a dressmaker. Many make garments at home, and then sit at the gateways in the *bāzārs* and sell them.

Very superior skill is needed for the two special kinds of embroidery, *qulāb-dūzī* and *rū-bandah-dūzī*. May we consider these in detail? The word *dūzī* means sewing, *qulāb-dūzī* is really a chain-stitch done by hand. The material, after being stamped with a pattern (this is done by men in the *bāzār*), is stitched into a frame. The thread is held underneath and the *qulāb*, an implement something between a steel crochet hook and a needle which is fixed into a wooden handle, is used to catch the thread through and make the stitches. Flowers, leaves or a conventional pattern are all filled in with the chain-stitch. This work is done in the first instance on the long pieces of cambric which are twisted into turbans or worn round the waist by men. The general colouring and material is old-gold silk, or cotton, on white cambric. Squares are often worked, very much as samplers were worked by our great-grandmothers; these are usually of some dark stuff, and they are covered with small figures of men and women and birds and animals all worked in coloured silks. Some are really comic, and one never gets tired of them.

Apart from the native uses for this stitch, it is very much used in articles for European sale—tablecloths, curtains, bedspreads, dresses, in fact anything to which embroidery may be applied.

An interesting point is the way in which this work is



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paid. At one time I used to get orders from friends in England, and so was able to give work to a number of women. I prepared the work by cutting up the material for cushions, tablecloths, or whatever I might want. Then I rolled up each article, tied it round with cotton, and weighed it in a native scale which is very accurate, and is supplied with very minute weights. I made a note of the weight of each piece against the name of the worker to whom I gave it. I told her the style of pattern I wanted, whether it was to be worked in silk or cotton, and of what colour, also whether it was to be hemstitched or not. The woman took it to the *bāzār*, had the pattern stamped, bought the native dyed silk or cotton and set to work. The following week, if it were not a very large piece, she brought it back. Again I weighed it, and calculated the price on each *miscal*, or sixth of an ounce, in the difference in the weight before and after working. We generally gave a trifle more per *miscal* than was done in the *bāzārs*, and for specially good clean work we were always ready to pay a little more.

The other kind of embroidery, the *rū-bandab-dūzī*, is what is used in the first place to form the little lattices in the long white *rū-bandabs*, or veils, which the townswomen wear. This, again, is adapted to all sorts of things, but is specially suitable for white tablecovers, or fine coloured muslin or silk table-centres, or d'oyleys and handkerchiefs. This is remarkably fine work, and to be good must be very accurate. A great many threads are drawn, and the women very much prefer to work in silk on cambric, and when I have asked them to work in cotton on linen they have found it very difficult. With this work it is not so easy to calculate the price as with the *qulāb-dūzī*. Threads are taken out, and often the weight of fine silk used would be almost negligible.

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Some of course show no aptitude for this fine work, or their sight may give way under the strain of it. Many of these are able to learn *giveh-dūzī*—that is, making the tops for the cotton shoes so universally worn by men, and increasingly being adopted by women, and Europeans also find them very good for tennis or for country wear. Some of these are very close and fine, others coarse and strong. They are made of native cotton with a special sort of needle, and the effect is rather like tight fine knitting. The uppers are made by women and the soles by men.

Some women work independently, taking orders for finished pairs. A great many, however, are made by women who cannot afford the small capital needed for this. Their case is met by merchants who send out materials, their agents calling at the houses of their workers. The payment they give is most inadequate, but the workers have no redress and must take that or nothing.

A few years ago two or three Englishwomen learnt to make torchon pillow-lace, and taught a number of women and girls in the schools. This has become quite an industry, and most of it is sold locally.

It may be asked, Why should Englishwomen teach Persian women lace-making or anything else? When you know the women you realize how many of them must support themselves, and as there are so few occupations open to them, anything of this kind is really a boon. Further, owing to the position of women, their work is very much underpaid in the *bāzārs*, and by offering better pay for the best work the standard is raised all round.

Englishwomen do a great deal in various towns to help the women who do these embroideries, by suggesting

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the adaptation of designs, preparing work, and getting orders for them from others in the country or from England. It is wonderful how much can be done by these means to help the women to help themselves. In Isfahān there is an industrial branch of the Church Missionary Society, the working of which is undertaken by Miss Biggs. She has a large number of women who work for her, and she is gradually getting a sale for their work in shops in England. By this means she is able to help the women all round. Many are taught to read, and by visits to their homes and by social intercourse they are brought into contact with Englishwomen and with Christian ideals.

In all schools which are provided by Westerners these native industries are carefully taught by qualified Persian women. It is a necessity that every girl, unless of a wealthy family, should have some kind of trade, so that in case of need she may be able to support herself, and in general the development of their own industries is the best way of helping them. My readers may think that the idea of helping Persian women is given undue prominence, but having seen the need, it is difficult to forget it.

There are many trades which a few women learn, such as the making of nails, brushes and leather charms. A great many knit socks, of white or khaki cotton, which are worn by men, women and children. Others make grotesque stuffed toys, chiefly dolls and so-called horses. They are quick to take up an idea. I wanted to bring home models of *kursīs* with their wadded quilts and mattresses and pillows, and ladies sitting around. A carpenter made the little tables, which I showed to the women, and gave them a large assortment of oddments, and told them to get anything else that was needed to

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make the dolls and the bedding. The result was wonderfully realistic, each figure seeming to me to be a caricature of some type of Persian woman.

There are special kinds of work peculiar to one district or another. Beautiful portières are made of native silk, dark blue or purple or shot, lined with cotton material, and edged with gimp or short fringe. These are embroidered all over in coloured silks in a chain-stitch, with patterns of birds and flowers, nightingales and narcissi, scrolls and devices, all well sprinkled with sequins, of which they are very fond.

Small silk squares embroidered and lined are used for folding clean clothes in to take them to the bath, or for sending a present in. Paper is scarcely used at all, but bags, of various kinds, handkerchiefs and embroidered silk and muslin squares are all used instead, and are often very beautiful.

Patch-work embroideries are popular in some parts of Persia. Jewish women, too, do most of the embroideries that the Moslem women do, and make very fine *givehs*. Armenian women knit beautifully, and produce wonderful socks and bags with elaborate patterns in silk and wool. They do attractive work with gold and silver thread on velvet, and sometimes make use of sections of silk cocoons in their embroideries.

If Persia is celebrated for any manufacture, it is that of carpets. These are referred to in various connections in other chapters; at this point I wish to discuss the carpet industry, and especially as it affects the women.

Though carpets have been made in Persia for over four thousand years, the typical Persian or fine-pile carpet is a product of the last five hundred years. The demand for Persian carpets at the present time is greater than it has ever been before, consequently many inferior carpets

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are made and exported, and the labour of women and children is increasingly used, as it is so much cheaper than men's labour, and to-day's competition demands that prices should be kept down.

Persians seem to have grasped from Nature herself what is correct in design and colouring. In Turkish carpets no human or animal forms may be represented, but either because Persian design may be traced far back before the Arab invasion, or because of the lighter and happier side of life presented by the beliefs of the Shiah, such things are found in their carpets.

I saw a large carpet once with Jacob and his twelve sons worked on it. Joseph was being drawn out of the well! At a carpet factory I visited in Kāshān in 1919 about thirty small girls were employed. The rooms in which they were working were fairly airy and very lofty. All the rugs on the looms were small ones, about four feet by two and a half, and were being woven in pairs. The special points about them were that they all contained figures and that the features and hair were raised. These parts were worked in longer pieces of wool, but the finished pictures, for such they really were, owed much to the careful cutting of the pile. One pair were of King George: these were being made for the British Legation in Teheran and were to be about £35 the pair. The factory-owner *said* that he paid the children two krans, at that time equivalent to 2s., a day, and that a child could make a rug in a month or six weeks. There were other rugs with the Madonna and Child, the Virgin of the Sacred Heart, a merchant, a dervish and various other designs. The weavers were nearly all working without patterns. I saw only one or two small coloured pictures with lines drawn across to help them to get the proportions right. One regrets the modern

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tendency to use aniline dyes, in spite of prohibitions against their use. A Persian will never be taken in by these colours, and Europeans are becoming wary.

Persians pride themselves on their understanding of colour, and wondrous are the ways in which they get and combine their shades. Very few of their carpets fail to satisfy one's sense of colour. It is to be feared, however, that the introduction of crude Western designs and colourings will pervert the taste of future designers and weavers—*e.g.* pink rosebuds in rows on a black background!

No machinery is used in the manufacture of carpets, the hand-loom merely containing the long threads of the warp, which may be wool or cotton. The balls of coloured wool are suspended above; the implements used are a rough knife for cutting off the lengths of wool, a broad, rough, pronged instrument for pressing the stitches together, and a large pair of scissors for cutting the surface even. Each stitch is knotted in separately, and a good carpet has 10,000 stitches to the square foot, the finest ones 40,000.

About thirty different kinds of carpets are woven in the country. Silk rugs and very fine woollen ones are made by children, as this fine work needs small fingers. Some girls go on with weaving after they are married, but as a rule a Persian man does not like his wife to work in a factory. Some women weave in their own houses, but the work is slow if done by one pair of hands only. Among the tribespeople and villagers a whole family often work at one carpet. This accounts for the irregularities of both weaving and pattern, though this is sometimes done purposely to avert the evil eye.

Certain kinds of carpets which are largely woven in

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the villages and encampments are called *gilims*. These are made of wool; the designs are usually geometrical; they have no nap and consequently do not improve with wear as the carpets do, but they are very light and useful, especially for travelling, and can be easily washed. They are largely used by the poor.

The only other industry which calls for comment is that of the spinning and weaving of silk, wool and cotton. We have seen how much of this is done by the village women who weave the strong cotton material which is used for clothing. For the check materials the cotton is dyed before weaving; *karbas*, the material which is largely used for men's clothing, is woven of white thread and then dyed one colour, more often blue than anything else, or it may have a pattern stamped on it by hand.

Women also weave camel's hair into *abbas*, the outer garments worn by men, and the tribeswomen weave the goat's-hair material of which their tents are made. Horse blankets and ropes are also woven from goat's hair.

The silk industry, including the rearing of silkworms, the spinning, and some weaving of silk, is an extensive one in the Caspian provinces. In Yezd there are said to be 1000 silk looms, at many of which women work.

There are many side industries which are very poorly paid, such as taking the cotton out of the pods and then picking out the seeds which are so firmly embedded in it. As sheep are rarely, if ever, washed, their wool becomes very matted and dusty; the cleaning of this is a woman's job.

Tobacco also has to be cleaned and sorted. In Shiraz and in Kurdistan numbers of women are employed in cleaning and sorting out for export gum tragacanth, the same probably as that carried by the Midianitish merchants.

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This is a juice which exudes from some desert shrub, and hardens so that it can be collected. It is sent to Europe, where it is used in medicine and also in "finishing" fabrics, leather and paper.

Village women and tribeswomen, as we have seen, work in the fields and look after the flocks and herds. Many of the women who work in the rice-fields in North Persia are married by the owner of the fields for the season and then divorced.

It is difficult to find many bright spots in the lives of Persian women; work is seldom a joy to any of them, merely a necessity. Some of them are very hard-working and capable, and one longs to see them better fitted for life, and allowed to take their rightful share in the progress and development of their nation and country.



## CHAPTER XXI

### FEASTS & FASTS

**I**T has been said that one of the causes of Persia's backwardness is the number of feasts and fasts which her people keep. All told, there are about forty of them, chiefly concerned with the Shiah martyrs and the other Imāms, but a list of all these would be wearisome, and it seems best to take only the outstanding ones for consideration. Of these the Mourning months of Muharram and Safar, the Fasting month of Ramazān, and the Festivals of Almsgiving and Sacrifice, and the Feast of the New Year are of real interest.

The Eed-i-No-Rūz, or New Year Festival, ushers in the solar year, which always begins on the 21st of March.

As Muhammadans, Persians also keep the Islamic year, which begins with the month of Muharram. This is a lunar year and has only 354 days, consequently it begins eleven days earlier each year. The alternate months have thirty and twenty-nine days.

This religious or lunar year supplies the Persian dates, and 14th August 1923 A.D. will be the first day of 1342 A.H.—*i.e.* dating from the year of the Hegira or flight of the prophet from Mecca to Medina in A.D. 622.

The Persians also have a cycle of twelve years, called Sanavat-i-turki, or Turkish years, which are solar, like the ancient Persian year, and begin on the 21st of March. Each year has a special name, such as the Mouse year, the Cow year, the Crocodile year, the Dog year, and so

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on. Documents generally bear the date of the lunar and solar years, and often the year of the cycle. The cycle when completed begins again.

All this may not seem to have very much to do with their feasts and fasts, but it shows how the land is bound by the faith of Islām, and yet still holds to an ancient institution which has triumphed over the introduction of a new faith, and which is observed with as much joy and festivity to-day as it was more than two thousand years ago.

No-Rūz, New Day or New Year, is the only Persian feast which has no religious connection. This is the beginning of the solar year, and is celebrated at the time of the vernal equinox, as soon as the sun passes into the sign of the Ram. Its origin dates back to the days of Jamsheed, and the sculptured procession at Persepolis is supposed to represent subjects bringing their New Year offerings to the king.

“The Story of the Enchanted Horse” in *The Arabian Nights* opens with the statement that “The No-Rūz, or New Year’s Day, is an ancient and solemn feast, which has been continued from the time of idolatry throughout all Persia, and celebrated with extraordinary rejoicings not only in the great cities, but in every little town, village and hamlet.

“But the rejoicings are the most extraordinary at the court, owing to the new and surprising sights; insomuch that strangers are invited from the neighbouring states and the most remote parts, and by the liberality of the king rewards are given to those who most excel in their inventions.” And then follows the story of the Indian and his magic horse.

Now more than a thousand years later No-Rūz seems to embody all that is brightest and best in the Persian national life.

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By No-Rūz the Persian winter is well over, the orchards are gay with fruit blossom and there are signs of spring on every hand, and this is accentuated in the celebration. Any first fruits, such as green almonds, or tiny cucumbers, are offered as presents. Sprouting wheat or barley is a great feature of this festival, grown much as we grow mustard and cress, on plates or large trays, or on the outsides of clay jars. These jars are filled with water and the grain is, for the first few days, bound to the outside of the jar with a piece of cotton material; when it adheres this is taken off and the grain sprouts in an upward direction. These and bunches of narcissi decorated with tiny circles of dark velvet are favourite offerings. No-Rūz is a time of giving *and* receiving, and presents are given in the hope of presents in return, the inferior offering the plant or flower or sweets and expecting a suit of clothes or a money present from his superior! At this season, unless the months of Muharram or Ramazān happen to coincide with it, as they do from time to time, everyone is glad, the spirit of spring is in the air and in the fields. Persians hate rain and snow in themselves, though they welcome them as God's best gift to the land, but they rejoice in the spring and summer. Everyone goes to the bath, everyone dons new clothes; many houses have some kind of spring-cleaning; every house has its provision for the New Year's Day feast, and plenty of tea and sugar, nuts and dried fruits and sweets for the days to follow. It is a universal holiday, and all business is suspended and shops closed, except for a short time each day, for the thirteen days of the feast. There are many curious local customs which are observed in different places. An egg put on a looking-glass placed flat on the ground is supposed to turn over at the moment of the passing of the earth from Pisces to Aries. Various

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fruits and grains must be eaten to ensure prosperity in the coming year.

In South Persia sea-gulls often fly inland about this season and are called "New Year's birds." Professor Browne tells us that the wood-louse enjoys a special popularity at No-Rūz, often being handled with gold coins "for luck."

Everyone wants to get outside the town and into the surrounding fields and gardens. Many are the parties of men who may be seen sitting round a tea-shop just outside the city or on the edge of the desert; numbers of women go off with their *kalyān* and samovar to spend a few hours at some shrine or in the corner of a field, or, best of all, in a garden. Enjoyment appeals to a Persian, and though it may be of the simplest, it satisfies him. The character of the people has scarcely changed since Omar Khayyām wrote :

“Now the New Year reviving old desires,  
The thoughtful soul to solitude retires,  
Come, fill the cup, and in the fire of spring  
The winter garment of repentance fling:  
The bird of time has but a little way  
To fly—and lo! the bird is on the wing.  
But come with old Khayyām and leave the lot,  
With me along some strip of herbage strown  
That just divides the desert from the sown.  
Here with a loaf of bread beneath the bough,  
A flask of wine, a book of verse—and thou  
Beside me singing in the wilderness—  
And wilderness is Paradise enow.”

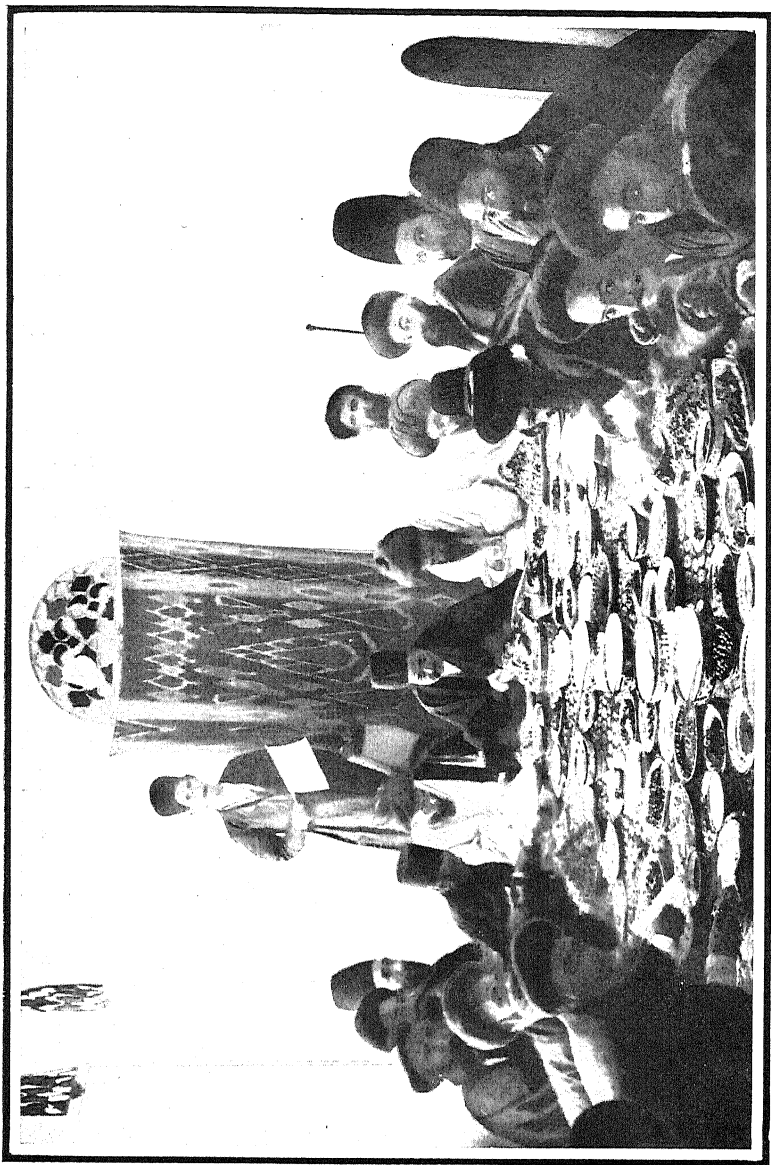
## Feasts & Fasts

The lunar year opens with the two mourning months, Muharram and Safar. During the first thirteen days of Muharram the mourning is for Imām Hosein in particular, and for his father Ali and his brother Hasan in general. The Shiahs reject the Caliphs and accept the Imāms, who were the direct descendants of the prophet, the first three of whom—his son-in-law, Ali, and his grandsons, Hasan and Hosein—take precedence in the commemorations of the Persians. Ali had been murdered, Hasan poisoned; Hosein was on his way to Kufa to receive the Imāmate, when he was attacked on the plains of Kerbela and murdered with seventy of his followers. This is annually commemorated by the Shiahs during the first thirteen days of Muharram. The Sunnis only keep the tenth day, or Ashūrā, as the day on which God created heaven and hell, Adam and Eve, the tablet of decree, the pen, life and death. They keep this day as a fast as the Shiahs do.

Various customs are followed in different parts of Persia in observing these days of mourning.

I have been during these special days in Bushire, Shiraz, Isfahān, Julfa, and a country district some miles from Isfahān, and what I shall try to describe is what I myself have seen.

During these two months most people dress in black, many old garments being dyed and worn out during this season of mourning. I have heard Persian ladies complain and say: "Why should we wear black? We don't see the necessity of it, but it is the custom and it would be misunderstood if we wore anything else." There are no weddings or festivities during these months. A great many readings are given. Part of a bāzār is carpeted and lighted up with lamps and candles, the audience sits on the ground, or on the fronts of the shops, while a mullā



#### A LUNCHEON PARTY.

Given by a wealthy merchant. The host is sitting on the right side and wearing a tall lamb-skin hat, the chief guest is in black sitting in the place of honour at the head of the "table." The men with the dark turbans are sayyids. Dishes of rice and bowls of mast may be distinguished. Down the middle of the table are alternate bowls of sherbet with floating wooden spoons and pieces of cut melon.

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reads or recites from the Qu'ran or Traditions. Free tea and smokes are often provided as *savabs*, or meritorious acts, by the faithful. Many houses have a black flag hung out over the door as a sign that mourning or weeping services are being held there. I was once invited to a house where they were having weeping services every day for a week. The compound was crowded with men; a pulpit had been erected at one side, from which a mullā was preaching; he was holding in each hand a long pole with a brass hand on the end of it; these were supposed to represent the hands of Hosein. The women were in rooms looking out on the compound, but all the doors and windows in these rooms were closely curtained, and the women could hear little and see less. When I went in, many of them were crying loudly over some mention of the sufferings of Hosein, but on my appearance they cheered up at once. We drank tea and then coffee, and many of them smoked. Most of us gave up trying to hear the preaching, and talked about some of the principles of a system which condemned her womanhood to spend her days behind the *purdah*, or curtain.

The chief feature, however, of the first nine days of Muharram is the performance of scenes from the lives of the Shiah martyrs, culminating with the murder of Hosein on the plains of Kerbela. These have been translated into English by Sir L. Pelly.

The enthusiasm which Moslems show for their faith is remarkable, but considering what this play is, the enthusiasm called out by its performance is more wonderful still. The more one reads or hears it, the more one wonders at its attraction. There is no plot; it has no distinctive character; it is full of repetition; it is most intolerably long, and tedious, and dreary. It certainly cannot be judged by any of our literary standards, but

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attraction it certainly has, and this would seem to be in its associations, and in its endless references to religious persecution. These seem to overpower its dramatic defects and call for our respect. It is a sacred thing in Persia, and as surely as Muharram comes round it produces this enthusiasm, which almost amounts to madness.

Most towns have one or two large houses where performances take place. Pious Moslems have in many cases left an endowment for the purpose. As a rule the compound becomes the theatre; it is hung with carpets, and decorated with lamps; the stage is erected over the tank; stands are put up on every available spot; the walls, trees and roof, all help to afford accommodation for the thousands of spectators, of both sexes. The townswomen who crowd in will all be seated together (four thousand women have been counted at one show), men with long wands standing over them and keeping them in order. Special windows will be reserved for the upper-class women, but these will have two, or even three, curtains in front of them. On one occasion when I was a spectator the window that I had to look through had two white curtains and then a black one stretched across it. The strain of looking through this darkened window helped one the better to understand the position of those who always look on life through a veil or curtain.

The principal parts are taken year after year by the same actors, all of whom, even for the women's parts, are men. The performances taken as a whole are very crude; some of the actors bawl, others cannot be heard; the prompter is always in evidence. There is seldom a curtain, and never any scenery. Actors killed in one way or another get tired of lying dead on the stage, and often get up and shuffle off! People go day after



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day, and get more and more worked up, until the tenth day comes, which is the anniversary of the death of Hosein, and on this day emotion reaches a climax. People beat their breasts and sob and wail in a distressing way. If you have never been a spectator at the Tazieh on the tenth of Muharram, you cannot realize the grip which their faith has on the Moslems of Persia. The grip is more on their emotions than on their hearts. Yet there is something in the appeal of the vicarious suffering of Hosein which is akin to the appeal of the Saviour of the world, and which makes the Christian message less strange to the Shiah than to the orthodox Moslem.

Another feature of the early days of Muharram, which gathers strength day by day, and culminates on the tenth, is the processing through the towns and villages of men and boys, all intent on showing their devotion to their martyred leader. These processions are generally followed by a crowd of veiled women. Some of the men and boys carry many-tailed whips tipped with iron, others a bunch of chains, with which they beat and lacerate their shoulders. The whip held in the right hand is used over the left shoulder, and that in the left hand over the right shoulder. There are constant cries of "Ya Ali, Hasan, Hosein!" The processions on the tenth are specially gruesome. The men wear long white garments, often bespattered with blood; many carry huge knives or swords, with which they cut their heads: it is almost the only time when Persians are seen bareheaded. As they march through the streets they keep up their wild cries, interspersed with songs such as:

"Kerbela this day hath been despoiled,  
Hosein with his own blood is soiled.

. . . . .  
Surely the stones shall weep to-day!  
Seventy and two were slain to-day!"

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Some carry large clubs, others beat their breasts until they are black and blue. Every district of a town has its own procession, and if by any chance two of them should meet, the result is disastrous. In Bushire the police spend their time in trying to prevent any such encounters. Many people fall victims to pneumonia or exhaustion as a consequence of the share they have taken in the day's celebration.

One of the most interesting insights I had into the Tazieh was in a village district about twelve miles from Isfahān. During the early days of the month the performances took place in a compound, but on the tenth there was a gathering of at least five thousand people, men, women and children, from miles round. It was in the early summer, and the days were hot. We had been welcomed at the performances in the compound, and when we asked if we might *tamasha* the proceedings of the tenth, we had a cordial invitation. I was staying at one of the prince's shooting-boxes near a large village with Lady Haig and her daughter; we had several consular guards with us, and the people could scarcely have done otherwise than allow us to be spectators. The performance was to take place out in the desert. When we arrived, the thousands of people who had come, not merely as spectators of, but as participators in, all that was to take place, were seated on the ground in a sort of oval formation, the centre being left as the stage. We were asked to sit down in the front row; behind us were rows and rows of village women and children. Big boys were together to our left, and all the opposite side was packed closely with men. We were sitting near the entrance where the performers came into what was more an arena than a stage, and was to represent the plains of Kerbela. There were men on excited

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and restless horses which objected strongly to the crowds, the tom-toms, and the shouting and crying, and I am afraid we did not appreciate our seats of honour, as we were sometimes almost under the horses' feet. People rode in and out, some representing travellers; men and women and children in *kajāvehs*, personating the family of Hosein, were very much in evidence. There were long arguments and speeches, desperate fights and exciting chases. We asked several officials when the climax, the killing of Hosein, would take place, and were always told "not until about an hour before sunset." We had been there for three hours, and as it was very hot, and as there were still six or seven hours to sunset, we decided to go to the house where we were staying and have lunch and a rest, saying that we hoped to come back in an hour or two. From our house, which was high up, we had a good view of the roads in all directions. When we first got back there was not a soul to be seen, everyone was at the show, but in less than half-an-hour people came along in crowds. We sent down to ask why they were leaving the performance, and were told that Hosein had been killed very soon after we left, and that it was all over.

The most important, and to them sacred, part of the show had been held up until we, who were unbelievers, had left. We quite understood it, but regretted that we had not been in at the death, though probably, if we had not left when we did, some ruse would have been adopted to get us away.

In some parts of Persia, for instance in Yezd, instead of the Tazieh, a great erection hung with daggers and looking-glasses, and called the "Nakl," is carried through the city. It is supposed to be moved by Fatimah, but many people seem to be needed to help her.

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The second month of mourning is called Safar, and this is a favourite month for setting out on a pilgrimage to Kum, Kerbela or Meshed. Pilgrimages are sometimes performed by proxy; a rich man or woman who is not strong enough, or who has no inclination for the long and difficult journey, will pay the expenses of someone to go in his or her stead. During this month many visits are paid to the graveyards.

Another important month in the Islamic calendar is the ninth, which is the fasting month of Ramazān. Fasting is one of the five things required of every Moslem. To the onlooker, Ramazān appears to be as much a feast as a fast, for while people are required to fast from early morning, when first a black thread can be distinguished from a white one, until dusk, when it is no longer possible to distinguish between them, they may feast all through the night. The moment for beginning and ending the fast is made known by the firing of a gun.

During Ramazān the sweet and biscuit makers produce most elaborate and delicious goods. Butchers, grocers and greengrocers do a busy trade, for it is a feast which lasts for twenty-nine nights, and if people are to fast by day, they think that they must keep up their strength by night. With all who are able, every night is kept as a feast. This is all right for those who can afford the expenditure, and who can sleep in the daytime. For those who must work by day it is a strenuous month. Children, invalids and travellers are not expected to keep the fast, though the two latter ought to keep it at the first possible opportunity. The season of the year makes a great difference in the observance of Ramazān. If it falls in midsummer it is very difficult, as not even a drop of water or a pull at the *kalyān* is allowed from sunrise

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to sunset. Many women are most diligent in keeping the fast; as devout Moslems, they hope to gain merit by observing it. In the Traditions it is said that "The person who fasts in the month of Ramazān, on account of belief in God and in obedience to his command, shall be pardoned of all his past sins." And to quote another passage: "When the month Ramazān arrives the doors of heaven are opened, and the doors of hell are shut and the devils are chained."

After Ramazān comes the month Shavvāl, the first day of which is the Eed-ul-Fitr, or the breaking of the fast, or the feast of almsgiving. After alms have been given, people assemble for prayer and a sermon, generally in an open space outside the city. After this they go to their houses, and the women especially make it a day of feasting and visiting and merriment, and presents are given and received.

The last and most important religious festival takes place in the twelfth month of the year, and is called the Eed-i-Kurban, or the feast of sacrifice. The prophet first intended this feast to represent the Jewish day of Atonement. Failing to gain the Jews over, he adopted the Arab sacrifice. There is nothing in the Qu'ran which connects this feast of sacrifice with the history of Ishmael, yet most Moslems look upon the feast as really a commemoration of Abraham's readiness to offer his son as a sacrifice. The Moslems claim that Ishmael, from whom the prophet was descended, was the son in whose stead a ram was substituted. On this Eed-i-Kurban, after public prayers and a sermon, one or more camels are slain, everyone endeavouring to get at least a small portion to take home to be cooked and eaten. A goat, sheep or cow may be sacrificed instead of a camel. This is essentially a religious festival, and more time should be

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spent in devotion and rejoicing than in merry-making. It is considered the greatest of their religious festivals, and its central act is the shedding of blood. Muhammad in the institution of this sacrifice upheld the Christian doctrine that "without shedding of blood there is no remission." In Merrick's translation of the *Hyat-ul-Kuloob* we read: "A person once asked the Imām Reza the meaning of the prophet's declaration that he was the son of two sacrifices to the Most High. The Imām explained by referring first to the case of Ismaēl, the darling son, respecting whom God had communicated glad tidings to Ibrahim. When Ibrahim was about to sacrifice Ismaēl, the Most High made a black and white sheep his substitute, which had been pasturing forty years in Paradise, and was created not in the course of nature, but by the direct power of God, to be offered instead of him on whose life such important events depended. Now every sheep sacrificed at Mina till the Judgment Day is a substitute, or commemorative of the substitute for Ismaēl."

"In regard to the other sacrifice, that of Abdul Mutalib, that chief had vowed at the *Kaaba* that if the Most High would bestow on him ten sons he would immolate the favourite one of the number. In pursuance of this object he assembled all his sons in the *Kaaba*, and three times successively cast lots for the victim, and at each trial the arrow was drawn marked with the name of Abdullah, the father of the prophet, and the dearest of Abdul Mutalib's sons. The chieftain bound and then laid down his beloved child, and addressed himself to the awful task of performing his vow, at which the angels of all the heavens cried out and expanded their wings to fly to the rescue. Meanwhile the Koraysh chiefs assembled, and with Abdul Mutalib's

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wives, who lamented most bitterly the bloody rite, endeavoured to prevent the execution of his purpose. At this crisis, Autekah, one of the daughters of Abdul Mutalib, besought her father to cast lots between her brother and a given number of camels, and increase the number until the Most High should accept the substitution. . . . Abdul Mutalib increased the devoted camels ten by ten, till one hundred camels were set apart as his substitute, when at last the animals were taken and his darling son set free. . . . Abdul Mutalib ordered the camels to be slaughtered . . . and made their flesh free to all who wished to partake of it."

## CHAPTER XXII

### SUPERSTITIONS

PERSIA abounds in superstitious ideas and practices. It is difficult to find any people without a certain amount of superstition, but Persia is a country in which the life and conduct of everybody is more or less affected by these ideas and practices. Animism is generally responsible for this attitude, and in ancient Persia animistic belief was strong. More than that, Islām was born in a pagan atmosphere, embraced many ancient Arabian fables, and was the product of pagan, Jewish and Christian beliefs. Wherever Muhammad went he adopted old, or introduced new, superstitions. Animism is the belief that a great part of, if not all, inanimate things, also birds, beasts and fishes, as well as man, are endowed with reason, intelligence and will. *The Arabian Nights* gives a vivid picture of the animistic side of Islām; in these tales the souls of men dwell in cats, dogs, snakes, gazelles, etc.

One day a young servant came up to me white and breathless. He had been shutting the fowls up for the night and saw a huge snake in the fowl-house. He was certain of it, and described its movements, and said he would not go near that part of the garden again. To pacify him I said: "You had better go and ask a snake-charmer to come, he will probably know how to deal with it." While he was out a Persian woman came to see me and I told her about the snake. "Oh," she



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said, "he is the *sahib* of the house, if you kill him his mate will come to revenge his death. He will do you no harm." She then went on to tell me at length how one night when she was asleep a large snake came and curled itself up against her. She did not oppose it, as he had a right to come if he liked, he was the *sahib* of the house, and early in the morning he glided quickly and quietly away.

In the north-west of Persia lizards are classed as believers and infidels; it is lawful to kill the latter. In the same deserts there are certain thorn bushes which always remain green though there is no visible supply of water. These the people believe are the abode of spirits, and many of them are hung with rags, pieces of the clothing of travellers, who have placed them there as offerings to the spirit dwelling in the bush.

The use of the blood of animals, of blowing, spitting and stroking, so as to bring benefit to sick people, are all used by Animists and are still common in Persia. The prophet is said to have worked cures by these means.

The strongest belief in Persia to-day is in the power of the evil eye. I have never yet met anyone who could explain this power, nor in any way suggest what it is, but I have often been told that so-and-so has an evil eye. One day I was riding through Julfa when my groom said: "Don't look at this man who is coming along, he has an evil eye, and if it falls on you it will do harm." Another day a man was telling me of an English lady I knew who was a very good horsewoman, and who had just been thrown from her horse while riding in the desert. I asked how it happened, and his answer was: "There was a man who passed them who has an evil eye; he must have looked at the horse, and it fell and the lady was thrown." There was no thought

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of the horse having put its foot on a stone, or in a hole, merely a look from a stranger had caused the accident.

One of the incongruous facts about the evil eye is, that it is not only possessed by the envious but also by those who admire. An old woman once looked into a Persian house where a mother and her three children were sitting; after a few general remarks she said, "How happy you all look. What beautiful children you have," and left the house. In a few days the children all sickened with some infectious disease, probably taken days before, and one after the other they died. The old woman's evil eye was put down as the cause of death. It never does to admire anything, especially a child, unless you add the pious expression "*Ma-sha-allah*" ("May God not do it"). The best thing to say is something of this kind: "What an ugly baby you have! How thin and miserable it looks."

We are told that Muhammad believed in the disastrous influence of an evil eye, and also countenanced the use of charms to avert it. A woman once asked him: "O Prophet, the family of Ja'far are affected by the baneful influences of an evil eye; may I use spells for them or not?" His answer was: "Yes, for if there were anything in the world which would overcome fate, it would be an evil eye." Another time he said: "There is nothing wrong in using spells, provided the use of them does not associate anything with God." The prophet also allowed a spell to be used for the removal of yellowness in the eye, which he said was "caused by the evil eye."

Many substances are supposed to contain "soul-stuff," which acts as a protection against the evil eye. This soul-stuff is a material conception, and by it is meant something which contains life-power or life-fluid. Blood is an instance; this is sprinkled on the foundations and

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door-posts of a new house or building, a sheep often being killed for the purpose. If a walnut-tree yields a poor crop, you are advised to kill an animal, by cutting its throat, at the base of the tree and then burying it there.

Soul-stuff is also found in certain metals, such as iron, gold, silver, brass, lead, also in jade. On this account a large pair of scissors, or some other steel or iron implement, is put at the head of the bed during the birth of a child, and kept there, or fastened to its hammock cradle afterwards. I have seen a woman with a large padlock and two keys tied round her waist in the hope that evil influence would be averted and that she would soon become the mother of a son.

Talismans are also made of metal or jade for the same reason. The talisman is really the mystical characters which are engraved on these sympathetic substances. The characters are astrological, such as the signs of planets or constellations, and supposed to be possessed of magical power. Talismans are worn by people of all kinds, but especially by women, to ward off evil, to keep them from enchantment or their possessions from harm. They are not only worn, for sometimes the greatest benefit will accrue if the talisman is put in the fire; at others, if it is put in something sweet, such as tea or sherbet; or if it is buried with hidden treasure as a protection.

Charms of every sort and kind are used. Blue beads and tiny shells are considered specially useful for keeping away the evil eye. One or the other is often tied to a woman's long plaits in the hope that if harm comes near them it will fall on the bead or shell instead. In the same way these charms may be fastened to valuable jewellery. Tattoo often attracts the evil eye, and so saves the individual from harm.

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Children are literally burdened with charms. The dried eye of a sheep which had been killed at Mecca on the great day of sacrifice is specially potent. An out-stretched hand made of silver and fastened to a necklet is very often seen, the fingers representing Muhammad, Fatimah, Ali, Hasan and Hosein. The number five is looked upon as a powerful protective agency. Islām makes great distinction between the right and left hand, and the right and left sides of the body. Many dark and uncanny superstitions refer to the left side of the body; the left hand is never used for eating, as tradition says that the devil eats with his left hand. A Moslem always spits to the left.

Amulets are very much used. They properly consist of the Qu'ran, or of extracts from it. They are placed in small gold or silver boxes, or in leather cases, and worn on the arm or leg, or round the neck. Animals also wear amulets, and these, besides containing verses from the Qu'ran, are decorated with blue beads. A donkey is said to bray when he sees a demon.

The Qu'ran is almost a fetish in modern Islām; not only is it worn as an amulet, but its recitation on various ceremonial occasions, such as birth, death or marriage, is essential. A copy is placed on the head of the new-born child and near the head of the dying. Certain chapters are of special value against evil spirits. The ninety-fourth and one hundred and fifth chapters read at morning prayer will keep away toothache; the thirteenth verse of the twenty-second chapter is a cure for headache, and for robbers in the night a verse is read from another chapter.

Special seasons are supposed to be fraught with great danger, especially the second month, Safar, which is considered the most unlucky and inauspicious month in the year. In it Adam is said to have been turned out of

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Paradise. Also in Safar the prophet contracted a serious illness, from which he began to recover on the last Wednesday; hence everyone is very relieved at reaching the last Wednesday in the month without mishap.

Fortune-telling, divination and magic all come under the same head. Mr Lane in his annotated edition of *The Arabian Nights* says: "There are two descriptions of magic: one is spiritual, regarded by all freethinkers as true; the other, natural, and denounced by the more religious and enlightened, as deceptive. The spiritual is divine and satanic. The divine is studied and practised only by good men, and consists in the knowledge of 'the most great name of God.'" By virtue of this they say Solomon did wonderful things. Other names of God and of the prophet are also believed to be efficacious. Satanic magic is worked on the same lines, but is condemned by all good Muhammadans, and is used only for bad purposes; illness and death are often attributed to its use. Charms with mysterious combinations of numbers and strange diagrams and figures are also largely used by those who study and practise magic.

Astrology is another branch of magic, and, though not considered lawful, is practised. Astrologers are consulted about lucky days for starting on a journey, for laying the foundation stone of a building, or for a wedding. Such things are sometimes decided by taking an omen from the Qu'ran, which is considered lawful. The book is opened anywhere, then seven pages are counted backwards, and guidance is taken from the seventh line.

Sometimes an omen is taken by using the *tasbeih*, or prayer chain, or rosary. Moslems are supposed to have copied the idea of the rosary from the Buddhists. The Crusaders later probably introduced its use into Christendom. The Muhammadan rosary has ninety-nine

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beads, each representing a title of God. These are divided into three sections of thirty-three, separated by a bead of a different kind, size or colour, which may be called the pointers. Taking the omen with a rosary is called taking the *istikhari*. When this is done, the rosary is grasped with the palms of the hands; the *Fatihah*, the first chapter of the Qu'ran, is then recited, after which the user breathes upon the rosary to put the spirit of the *Fatihah* into it. Next one bead is grasped and the user counts towards the pointer, repeating the expressions, God, Muhammad and Abu Jahal, or Adam, Eve and the serpent. If the count terminates with the first, the decision is good; if with the last, it is bad; and if with the middle one, it is uncertain and is generally taken again. The *istikhari* is taken in this way about quite small things—e.g. a visit to a foreign hospital. If the count is good and the patient goes, an operation may be advised, or medicine ordered, but before these are agreed to the *istikhari* must be taken again. Many bottles of medicine have stood for weeks on the *tākchah* because the omen was not good.

We have seen how a sneeze is regarded as a bad omen; a second sneeze immediately following counteracts the evil nature of a single sneeze, and is often, at all events by foreigners, simulated.

People think that they can be bewitched by the cuttings of their hair, or by the parings of their nails. They believe that these contain soul-stuff and may also be used for spiritual communications. On this account they hang these with shreds of their garments on the railings or gratings round the tomb of a saint, with the hope that they may become the mediums of communication with the dead saint who is buried there.

Moslems believe that man has two souls or a double

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ego, just as the belief is found in pagan mythology. This second soul is understood to be an evil spirit and of the opposite sex to the soul with which it dwells. This evil spirit is always jealous and malignant, and the cause of much physical and moral ill, unless the influence is warded off by the use of talismans, charms and amulets; hence the wearing of so many of these. This evil spirit is considered responsible for want of love between husband and wife, for sterility, and for untold misery in young and old. This spirit may be lurking in a cat.

Though there are numberless other superstitions current in Persia, many of them are local ones, and the last to call for special mention here must be the belief in jinn or genii. *The Arabian Nights* shows us how large a place these occupy. Every pious Moslem believes in their existence, and that supernatural and alarming things are constantly caused by them. Their prophet was a sincere believer in both good and evil genii. In the seventy-second Sūrah he says: "It hath been revealed to me that a company of jinn listened." Mr Lane tells us that this species consists of five orders. They are thought to be aerial animals which can assume varied forms. It is said that God created them two thousand years before Adam. They were created from fire and are of divers shapes, often invisible, and of great number; they marry and propagate and are mortal. They are peaceable, and eat and drink. They sometimes take the form of jackals, wolves, dogs, cats, scorpions, serpents and human beings. Domestic snakes are said to be genii. They become invisible at will, and it is a common belief that the pillars of dust so often raised by the whirlwinds in the desert are caused by the flight of an evil genii.

Their chief place of abode is said to be the mountains of Kaf, which encircle the world. But they are supposed

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to be very partial to wells, ovens, public baths, ruined houses, market-places, rivers, the junctions of roads, and graveyards. Soon after a child is born a needle is stuck into its clothing, or an iron charm is fastened on its cap, as it is believed that the jinn will not come near a child which is protected in this way. The superstitious believe that the jinn sometimes carry off a child and substitute a jinn child. This is known by its cessation of development and speedy death. Through this universal belief the ignorant, and especially women and children, are all their lifetime subject to needless fears.

Though one would hardly class this as a superstition, a personal devil and his angels are believed in. Before reading the Qu'ran or praying, a Moslem "seeks refuge in God from Satan the pelted." Their prophet said that Satan used to be an eavesdropper at the door of Heaven, until God and the angels drove him back by pelting him with shooting stars. If a child is naughty or taking advantage, it is spoken of as doing like the devil. Haste is said to be from the devil, and is not considered good except in these matters—getting a husband for your daughter, setting food before a guest, and burying the dead. The devil's power is universal. It is said in the Qu'ran: "There is not one of the children of Adam except Mary and her son (Jesus), but is touched by the devil at the time of its birth."

One of the elements of daily prayer is a cry against demons, and one reason of the ablution before prayer is to free the worshipper from the presence and influence of the same. No one dares to pray without some object being placed between him and the *Kibla*—i.e. the direction of Mecca—in order that he may not be harmed by any evil spirit passing between. For this a "prayer stone," consisting of compressed earth from Mecca or Kerbela,



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is generally used. At the close of prayer the worshipper salutes the two angels on his right and left shoulders. During prayer the fingers must be separate, and the mouth should not be covered. The watering-places of camels are forbidden for prayer, as camels are said to have been created by devils. At public prayers no gaps are allowed between the worshippers, lest Satan should come in and take the vacant place.

## CHAPTER XXIII

### ILLNESS & DEATH

FROM much that has gone before, it will be seen that Persia is in an extraordinarily backward state, but in no one thing is she more behind the times than in her knowledge and practice of medicine. It is true that much is being done to remedy this. Nothing, except money, appeals to the Persian more quickly and powerfully than efficient medical help. What has been effected by Government and mission doctors, with their Western training and drugs and appliances, has done more than anything else to break down barriers, to lessen prejudice, and to inspire the people with the desire to equip themselves so that they may become successful doctors and surgeons. I wish it were possible to say that they are actuated by the desire to help their own people; some certainly are, like a Shiraz doctor who stuck to his post all through a cholera epidemic, but the majority look upon medicine as a profession that has money in it. There are medical colleges in Teheran and Tabriz, and many students proceed to London, Paris or Berlin to finish their training. Many unqualified doctors who do valuable work are the product of the English and American mission hospitals. Some of these also have gone abroad for further experience.

So far only one or two women have taken up medicine as a profession; but a number of girls, Armenians, Jews and Moslems, have become most capable and valuable



THE LOWER PART OF THE KAMARIJ KOTAL ON THE BUSHIRE SHIRAZ ROAD.

Notice the rough stairway up and down which for centuries there has been an enormous amount of traffic, also the span of the wires of the Indo-European Telegraph Co. The top of the pass is in the depression above the telegraph wires

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nurses after their training in the various mission hospitals. It is remarkable that a country with an ancient civilization such as Persia has, should have so little knowledge of the science and practice of medicine. The need of suffering humanity is so great, and its appeal so urgent, that all round the world men and women have responded and done their utmost to mitigate that suffering. Not so has it been in the land of Persia; rather would it seem as though some essential germ of life or of wisdom is missing from Persia's sons and daughters. Until recently it has had no hospitals, asylums or orphanages. True, it has had for centuries men who have professed to be doctors, many of whom, after having spent a few shillings on drugs and on a book of general medicine, have put up a sign-board outside their dwellings announcing themselves as doctors. Patients have come, and over and over again have mistakes been made in diagnosis and in drugs; but it is in surgery where the greatest blunders are made. The late Dr Hume-Griffith tells of a Persian who combined the callings of a doctor and a butcher. One day a young man was brought to him with a bad swelling on the knee. The patient had been gradually getting worse, and had been brought by his father to see Dr Hume-Griffith, who, realizing the very serious condition of the boy, had told him that the only hope lay in an operation. The father would not listen to this, and so decided to consult one of his own countrymen. This man, with the dual profession, said that he could get rid of the lump in a very short time; all that would be necessary would be for three people to hold the patient, one at the head, the others at the feet. This seemed much simpler than the operation suggested by the foreigner. The boy was held, the "doctor" approached with a heavy stone, which, raising above his

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head, he brought down with all his strength on the lump. Two days afterwards the boy was dead.

These untutored surgeons work without an anæsthetic and without a sterilizer, and the stump left after an amputation is sometimes plunged into boiling oil. A broken limb will be bandaged up so tightly that mortification sets in. A wound will be bound up and not opened for days, when its condition is past description. Cataract is very common, and Dr Hume-Griffith described the methods employed by Persian surgeons, who use the old Eastern operation known as "couching": "An incision is made into the white of the eyeball (without any anæsthetic), then a thick and blunt probe is worked into the interior of the eye, directed so as to dislocate the lens. If successful the lens drops back into the interior of the eye, and the patient 'sees,' but alas, the vision obtained is, in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred, only temporary! Twenty-four hours later, inflammation of the eye supervenes, and the sight is gone, and the eye lost. Needless to say, the operator obtains his fee either before the operation is done or during the few hours that the patient is rejoicing in his newly found vision; then if he is wise he disappears from the town and resumes his practice elsewhere. However, during eight years' practice in the East, and having had the opportunity of examining thousands of eyes, I can remember two cases only where this operation had been done, and there had been no consequent inflammation, but the great majority of eyes are lost."

For sore eyes an incision may be made in the arm and a blue bead inserted and bound up, an abscess being the usual sequel. A charm or prayer may be written on paper and sewn on a child's hat, or down the back of his coat, or even placed in an opening in the flesh and sewn up.

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For fever a paper can be bought with a charm written on it, which must be washed off, and the dirty water given to the patient to drink. A wound may be filled with dried peas to keep it open. For the bite of a dog, some of the animal's hair must be singed and applied to the bite. For a burn, the ashes of a piece of blue calico which has been dyed with indigo, or the contents of a bottle of ink, may be applied. At one time I noticed that my English ink disappeared very quickly, and one day I saw that some had been spilt on the steps outside my room; on inquiry I found that someone in the kitchen had burnt his hand, and not only once or twice, so I suggested more suitable remedies, and frightened them about using English ink. Persian ink really seems to do some good in cases of burns. I have seen a black paste covering a sore hand, which has proved to be a mixture of pomegranate juice, egg and gunpowder, the whole wrapped up in a dirty rag or piece of coarse paper. I have also seen white of egg smeared on a wound and covered with leaves.

The conditions of life in Persia, with no good water supply, no sanitation, no real knowledge of the body and its needs, cause the health records to be very bad. With this, too, must be considered the fact that only the fittest grow up, and that there are none of the many causes of accident which are found in our advanced civilization. With no mining, no shipping, no railways, no motor vehicles, no factories, and no machinery worth speaking of, a wonderful climate, and a good food supply, there ought to be a splendid health record, but nothing could be further from the actual facts.

We have seen the ignorance in regard to treatment, let us look at the illnesses which call for this treatment.

Ordinary fever, relapsing fever, and malaria, Oriental

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sores, scabies and favus, are most common. There are few people who have not had enteric fever, and many others who have fallen a prey to typhus. Small-pox, except in the few centres where vaccination is possible, is considered to be a necessary illness for every child; whooping-cough, too, has many victims. Tubercular bone trouble is common, but phthisis less so. The ravages of venereal disease are terrible. There are many mad people whose condition often corresponds with that of the demoniacs in the time of Christ. Child marriage has to be reckoned with for an immense amount of suffering and often life-long misery from the conditions which result. Many upper-class women, owing to their dull, monotonous lives, suffer from hysteria, which takes many of the varying forms of that curious disease. Eye affections of every kind are universal; many are accounted for by the dust and flies, and in the case of women from the custom of wearing and often borrowing veils and chādars. Trachoma and inturned eyelashes are very common. There are more operations needed for these troubles than for anything else. Though carpet-weaving has already been considered, something must be added about the weavers in Kirman, where the conditions and the result of these on the health of the workers are worse than anywhere else in Persia. Dr Everard Dodson, who has worked for many years in Kirman, writing in 1920, said: "Starting at the ages of five, six, or seven years, the children, boys and girls alike, work from sunrise till sunset, week in week out, with but a half-day on Friday for holiday. The work is carried on in ill-ventilated hovels, warmed in the cold of winter only by the heat of their bodies, and overheated in summer by sheer want of air and space. Thus many fall victims to a very crippling form of late rickets, which affects not only the bones of the arms and

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legs, but those of the skeleton of the body also. One result is a gross form of knock-knee which renders walking difficult or impossible, so that many children have had to be carried by their parents to or from their homes. There is another result. Girls after their marriage are thrown into the greatest danger as the time of their confinement draws near, both mother and child being faced with certain death. The native midwives, not foreseeing this risk, used to make no preparation for it, and only gave up their futile efforts to deliver the children when the mothers were moribund."

In the course of an inquiry a few months later into the facts of the case, it was shown that in one year there were forty-seven cases of deformed carpet-weavers, all expectant mothers, under treatment in the Kirman mission hospital. In twenty-eight cases the women had been several days in agony, and were brought in in a state of severe exhaustion. The children of all these twenty-eight died, but the mothers, who in the hands of native midwives would have died, were, owing to the surgical assistance given them in the hospital, restored to health, and the other nineteen babies were given a good start in life. In addition to this, nineteen girls were operated on for crippled limbs; and a large number of girls suffering from rickets, paralysis of limbs, and other deformities due to carpet-weaving were treated as out-patients.

Opium smoking and eating are also responsible for a great deal of evil and suffering, and for this, again, Kirman has a worse reputation than other places. There are few houses without an opium pipe, and men and women are alike victims of this terrible curse. Men smoke openly in the *bāzārs* and coffee-shops, but women only in their own houses. When once the habit is established,



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any regular work is difficult, and one by one household possessions and clothes are sold to procure the drug. It becomes a case of smoke or die. Many, when they realize that the habit is becoming a confirmed one, go to the hospital or to a doctor and beg for help to give it up. In such cases, if they have not gone too far, a cure may be effected. The late Miss Mary Bird, who worked in Kirman, referred to some of her experiences with opium smokers as follows:—

“An opium smoker, who has recovered powers of eating and sleeping, is only taking a quarter of his usual quantity, and is very anxious to give that up. The poor creature looks like a wizened, wooden old monkey, but is, I believe, only twenty-two. Everything had been sold to procure the drug which he said was killing him. I saw another poor victim; a black skeleton would best describe him, and he is quite young. He wants to give it up; he says he knows it is fast killing him, but ‘I cannot. I shall go mad or die if I don’t smoke.’

“I saw a woman lean against the doorway. . . . I knew by her contracted pupils that she had had a large quantity of opium. . . . She said: ‘My child—opium.’ Throwing back her chādar, I found such a fine boy about a year old dying in her arms. Dr S. and I tried all we could, but in vain, and the little pet died in my arms. . . . She had been smoking sitting on the ground; the baby, she remembered, was playing with the pellets of opium; more she did not know. She died the next day, leaving three other tiny children, all opium inhalers from birth.

“A woman who had smoked opium for years developed the signs of opium poisoning. Her friend — called me in, and she recovered. The baby was a wee shrivelled-up brown monkey; the mother wanted to blow opium in its face for it to inhale, but I first tried rubbing; how-

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ever, it got weaker and worse, till, fearing it would die, I gave in and let it have opium, when it soon came round. Is it not dreadful? I have now four babies of about a year old under treatment, giving them tonics and coffee as a restorative if faint, and ordering them three whiffs less each day.”

Most accidents are caused by fire-arms, by falls from horses or trees or roofs, by burns, often from the fire placed under the *kursī*, small children especially rolling under and being burnt. The upsetting of lamps and boiling water are also responsible for many burns and scalds, and, lastly, many people, and often women, are injured in fighting with each other, generally over very small matters.

So many of these illnesses and accidents need never occur if the people had a little more common-sense knowledge of things.

Persians are still the followers of Hippocrates and Avicenna, and divide all illnesses, all medicines and all foods into hot and cold, moist and dry. A typhoid patient has a hot disease so must have a cold diet, hence the juice of a water-melon, and that only. Ulcerated throat is also a hot disease and needs a cold cure. A cold calls for warm food, and if chicken broth is taken it must be made from a hen, as if made from a cock it would be cold. Lump sugar is cold and moist sugar is hot. Persians appreciate foreign doctors, who appear to recognize their prejudices in such matters.

Many curious expressions are used about their ailments—*e.g.* an abscess in the leg would be described as “a devilish wind”; dropsy is considered to be “wind,” of which at last the sufferer gets so full that he will be wafted up to heaven. The after-effects of small-pox may be spoken of as “the cold wind of small-pox”;

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palpitation as "the flapping of a dove's wings"; a cold as the "eating of a chill." Some people think they must have at least one cold a month to relieve the brain, otherwise they might go mad. A decayed tooth is said to be "worm-eaten." Some illnesses, such as St Vitus's Dance and epilepsy, are attributed to jinn and devils, the spell of whose influence must be broken before the patient can recover.

Superstition enters very largely into both the cause and cure of disease. A charm is supposed to be of more use than reasonable care in its prevention, and than the right medicine in its cure. There is a strange belief that a medicine is first given to make a patient worse, and then a second to effect a cure. On this account people sometimes ask to have the second medicine given first. Very aggravating are the cases where a patient is seen and medicine given, some days elapse and the patient returns complaining that there is no improvement. When questioned, it transpires that the omen was taken with the beads, and, proving bad, the medicine was not touched.

The wonderful popularity of European doctors and their hospitals shows that the Persians do know a good thing when they see it. When owing to German intrigue Isfahān was evacuated in 1915, many people were desirous that the doctors might remain, promising that they should not be molested. As all Allied representatives were ordered to leave, this request could not be granted, but the welcome accorded when nine months later they returned was remarkable. Mission hospitals are the Gospel in action, and the thousands of people who are helped by them realize that what is done for them is not done to make money, but out of love and compassion. This to them is a foreign idea, and their wonder is great.

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Many wealthy Persians help the hospitals by gifts of money, and several have given land and buildings for hospitals. As a Persian seldom gives money for which he does not receive the equivalent, they evidently realize that their money is well spent. In 1914 the Persian Central Government went so far as to remit all customs duties on drugs and instruments for the Isfahān hospital, by promising an annual grant of £50. This has been regularly paid up to the present.

Gratitude is scarcely a Persian characteristic, yet thousands leave the hospitals with a feeling in their hearts that has never been there before, when they remember all that skill and patience and kindness have done for them.

Considering the country they are in, and the difficulties which have to be contended with, the mission hospitals in Persia are well up to date—*e.g.* in the men's and women's hospitals in Isfahān, which have been brought to their present state of efficiency by the untiring devotion of Dr Donald Carr, Dr Emmeline Stuart and their colleagues; there are over 200 beds, private wards for upper-class patients, isolation wards, roof shelters for tubercular patients, and well-equipped operating theatres. Attached to the men's hospital is a laboratory for general pathological work, and another for cultural work, for paraffin embedding, making vaccines and other things. Sections of tumours and other pathological conditions are made, and smears of blood from large numbers of cases are sent from both hospitals for examination. Blood cultures are undertaken for indefinite fever cases. The Wassermann and Widal reactions have been undertaken and proved very valuable. A good deal of bacteriological work is done both for diagnosis and the preparation of vaccines.

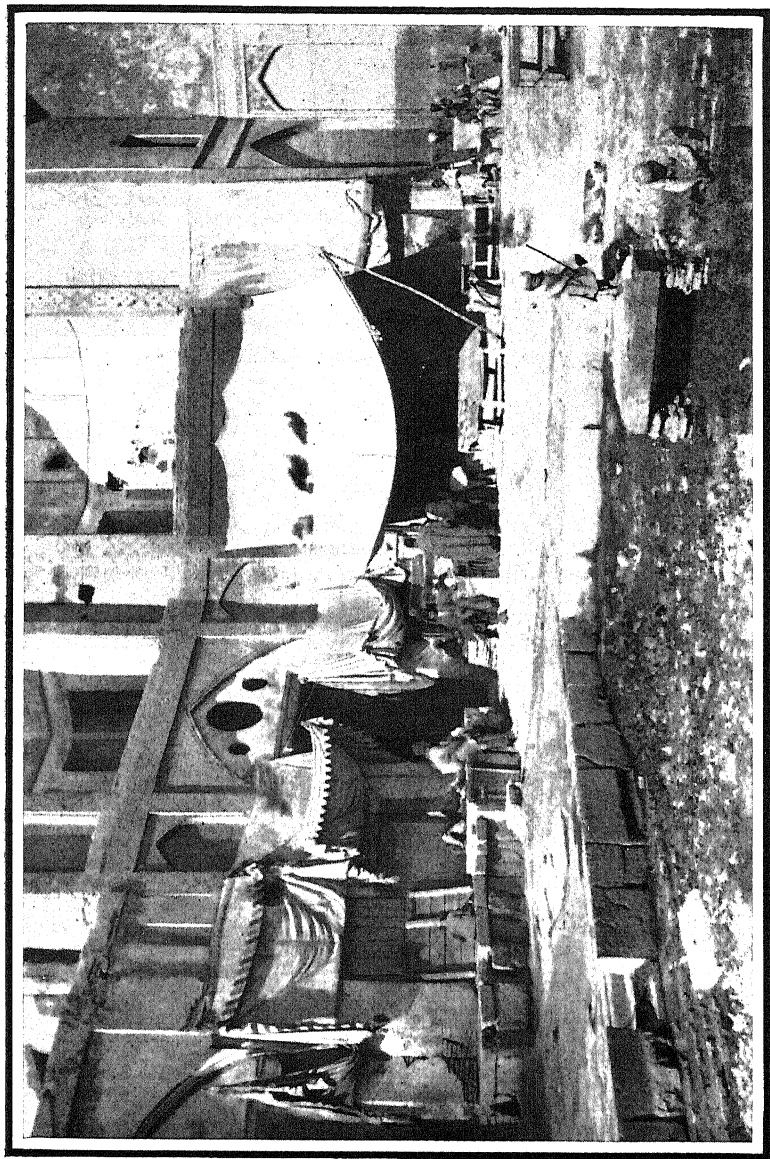
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There is a well-equipped X-ray department with Crossley oil engine and dynamo and 100-volt installation with accumulators. A large amount of ionic medication and other electrical treatment is undertaken, and very effectively too, as I know from personal experience. A "Multostat" is in daily use. Antrum illumination and electric lights for other surgical examinations are now available, and electric light has been installed in parts of both hospitals. There is also a large and busy tuberculin department.

In the eye department a great deal of refraction work is done. Everything has had to be set up and set going by the European doctors, who have most successfully trained native assistants, both men and women, for special jobs. Machinery is so new to the Oriental. Exactitude, punctuality, cleanliness, all have to be learned as a foundation; and then comes the teaching and training in the use of Western machinery, instruments and methods. Much has to be done under supervision, but it is astonishing how efficient both men and women can become in what to them, as a race, is entirely alien. Hospitals in Persia have been described as "workshops for repairing men and women," and it is wonderful to see what is done in them for the sick and suffering. Many are carried in more dead than alive, having been brought four or five days' journey in a basket on the back of a donkey. People of all classes come from the town, for they know that if there is any chance of recovery it will be in the foreign medicine house.

Hospitals are far more needed in a land like Persia than in the West, where most people know something of nursing, and where real homes exist.

The conditions under which illness must be endured in a Persian house would be very trying to us. In the



ONE OF THE PRINCIPAL ENTRANCES FROM THE MAIDAN-I-SHAH TO THE ISFAHAN BAZAAR.

The dark doorway on the left is the entrance. At the extreme right there is a "coffee shop" where tea and smokes are sold. The tank is more useful than conducive to health.

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winter, when a whole family spends all its spare time by day and night sitting or lying round the *kursī*, the invalid has no choice but to do the same; and the worse the patient is, the more public will this room become. Inquisitive and sympathizing relatives and friends crowd in and sit round the room drinking tea, smoking the *kalyān*, and talking as though the patient's life depended on it. The air is used up, and the noise is deafening; but if people did not come and show their interest in this way it would be considered unkind.

If an illness is likely to end fatally, the patient makes a will, which may be handed over to someone else, or left in his own keeping. A mullā will probably be brought in to read special passages from the Qu'ran, and the patient's mattress will be turned so that Mecca may be faced.

When death takes place, the fact is announced by the nearest relative to all within hearing, after which a mullā very often makes the announcement from the roof. Everyone in the house immediately begins to weep and wail, and very quickly the hired mourners arrive and numbers of friends, especially women, each of whom as she comes in utters the conventional death shriek. Moslems are not supposed to mourn for their dead, their lamentations at the time of a death ought to be really for the suffering and death of Hosein. The tears of sympathizing friends are much appreciated, and are often collected with a piece of cotton-wool and preserved in a tear-bottle.

Moslems believe that at the time of death the spirit of a believer comes out easily and sweetly from the body, like pure water from a goatskin. The soul of the wicked is dragged forth by the angel of death fizzing and sputtering "as a hot spit is drawn out of wet wool."

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Hideous demons wrap him in sackcloth and take him to the gate of the lowest heaven. The doorkeepers say: "No welcome to thee, vile soul, go back, accursed, the doors are not open to thee." He is then cast back to earth to rejoin his body when it is placed in the grave.

The haste at the time of death is dreadful. The body is quickly taken away and washed, either by the men or women whose calling it is, or by relatives. The public places for washing the dead are generally by streams which run deep down and are approached by steps or a sort of tunnel, but sometimes the public stream is used. All details as to the washing with soap and water, and with camphor water, and the arrangement of the various pieces of the grave-clothes, three for a man and five for a woman, made of new white cambric, are given in the Traditions. Coffins are not used unless the body is to be taken to a distant place for burial, but the corpse is put into a rough wooden bier and carried on the shoulders of four relatives, or it may be placed on the back of a mule or pony. Only men accompany the deceased to the burying ground. It is dreadful to see the women sitting in the compound, or in the middle of the road, shrieking and wailing, pulling out their hair, tearing their clothes and throwing dust over their heads. If the deceased is a man or boy, the chance of their ever seeing him again is remote. The procession moves on at a great rate, no one walking in front of the bier, as they believe that the angels walk there. No one rides, because the angels walk. The prophet told his followers to use all speed in carrying the dead to the grave, because, if a true believer, he would so much the sooner attain rest and happiness; and if an infidel, the sooner he was taken from the house the better for the other inmates, and the more quickly



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the bearers to the grave could get rid of their burden, the happier would it be for them. There is something weird and pathetic about these funeral processions; every one walks where he likes, at the side or behind the corpse, uttering pious ejaculations and enumerating the merits of the deceased. The readings from the Qu'ran and the prayers are considered too sacred for a polluted place like a graveyard, so are recited either in the compound of the deceased's house, in a mosque, or in an open space near the graveyard. The large cities all have enormous, desolate-looking burying grounds on the outskirts, often on the edge of the desert. There are small ones attached to some of the mosques, otherwise in town or village they are all open pieces of ground generally too high to benefit by the water supply, and so of no use for cultivation. Neither a flower nor a blade of grass is to be seen, yet the Moslem believes most implicitly in the resurrection. The graves are very shallow, but that for a woman is two feet deeper than that for a man; they are often rifled by thieves for the shrouds, or by jackals and dogs.

The graves are dug north and south and are arched, and the body is placed on its side, facing Mecca, with the bandages untied, and with two short sticks under the arms to assist in its assuming a sitting posture during the examination by the angels of death.

It is believed that at the moment that the funeral party leave the graveyard two fierce black angels, with blue eyes, called Munkir and Nakir, visit the dead person and question him as to his faith in God and in the prophet. It is thought that all true believers will answer, "Allāh is my Lord, Islām my religion, and Muhammad my prophet," and for those who are able to say this the grave will become spacious and light, and

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they will be told to sleep until God shall raise them up on the Day of Resurrection. If unable to answer satisfactorily, the grave will close in upon them, and they will suffer perpetual punishment until the resurrection. All this is actually believed as taking place and is not in any way merely figurative. Unbelievers are said to cry out in their agony, their cries being heard by animals but not by men or jinn. Prayers for the dead are esteemed of much value, and relatives and friends visit the graves with great regularity. Women have often spoken to me of going to the grave of some near relative on a particular day and saying: "I must go, his (or her) eyes will be on the road watching for me."

Over the graves of specially devout or rich people a tent will be erected in which a mullā will read and pray for as many days as the relatives are willing to pay. A well-known prince was temporarily buried in a room of which he had been very fond, adjoining an orangery in his garden. For a year afterwards two Sayyids were paid £50 each, one of whom was to be reading night and day by the grave. Later the body was removed to a mausoleum built for the purpose. Many bodies are buried temporarily in the graveyards, awaiting an opportunity to be taken to one of the sacred burying grounds at Kum or Kerbela. Much merit is supposed to accrue to the dead by the readings and prayers and the sacred place of burial. At the last day all will be raised, and the good and bad deeds of each will be placed in a balance. Those whose good deeds outweigh the bad will pass over the bridge Sirāt and so enter paradise, and the others, unless God has mercy on them, or the faithful intercede for them, will fall into the fire, where, if they have been Moslems,

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they will be purified and at last enter paradise. For infidels there is no hope. Most realistic and exaggerated descriptions of both paradise and hell are given in the Qu'ran and Traditions. The prophet certainly pictures a paradise after his own heart; and in his descriptions of hell his Arab love of revenge shows itself, and he seems to believe that God takes pleasure in the awful miseries of the lost. The following lines are taken from Sūrahs lv. and lvi.:—

“A garden of delight . . . with couches and ewers and a cup of flowing wine, their brows ache not from it nor fails the sense; theirs shall be the houris ever virgins. . . . Peace, peace! And the people of the right hand—O! how happy shall be the people of the right hand. . . .

But the people of the left hand—O! how wretched shall be the people of the left hand!

Amid pestilential winds and in scalding water and in the shadow of a black smoke.” . . .

“Two gardens with overbranching trees in each:

In each two fountains flowing:

In each two kinds of every fruit: . . .

On couches with linings of brocade shall they recline, and the fruit of the two gardens shall be within easy reach.

. . . therein shall be the damsels with retiring glances.” . . .

“Mid gardens and delights shall they dwell who have feared God.”

Al-Ghazali, one of the greatest Moslem theologians, states that Muhammad said: “The believer in Paradise will marry 500 houris, 4000 virgins, and 8000 divorced women.” What the commentators say on these and other texts is not fit for translation. Everything is interpreted literally, whether they be physical joys or tortures.

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Those who really want to understand Islām should read the Qu'ran and the Traditions; there is so much that cannot be offered to the general reader, but to those who have studied these writings, life in a Moslem land is no longer an enigma.

## CHAPTER XXIV

### PATRIOTISM

**P**ATRIOTISM and Persian women do not seem on the surface to have much in common. The country gives so little to its women and asks little from them. Their liberty of movement, of action and of speech is curtailed. The majority have never thought of doing their bit for their country; they have not seen that their country has any need for them except as the playthings or the drudges of its men. And yet in spite of this there have been, from the days of Persia's Queen Esther, down to the present day, women who have risked much for the sake of their nation or their land. In the centuries before the Greek conquest of Persia there were several queens who enjoyed great power and evidently ruled well. On the death of Muhammad Shah, in the early part of the last century, things were in a very critical state, and it was not possible for the young Shah to cope with them. The queen-mother became president of the State Council, and cleverly conciliated unfriendly parties, and strengthened the government, until her son's position was made secure.

But it is the patriotism of women of recent and present times which most concerns us. It is only by a change of spirit that people see life differently and are anxious to readjust their attitude towards it. Here and there a Persian woman may be found who has had the vision of what she can do. The majority feel that to marry,

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bear children, cook the food, take all that comes as *kismet*, grow old and die, is all that is expected of them. For centuries the position of most Eastern women has been a crying evil, yet, knowing nothing better and believing themselves weak, they have accepted it. Now some have found out their own strength and are putting it to the test.

During the Persian revolution of 1910-1911 many women exerted a powerful influence on the movement. Three hundred women surrounded the entrance to the *Majlis*, or Parliament, recently formed, and demanded admission. A few only were admitted. They walked in closely veiled, but when they found themselves in the assembly they tore their veils aside, and said that their intention was to kill their husbands, their sons and themselves if the liberty and dignity of Persia were not firmly upheld. They offered their money and jewels, saying: "We are women and cannot fight, but we can give to our country." They had their own places of assembly where they discussed these matters, and they used the Press, and personal influence was largely exerted. In the mosques one part is separated from the rest by a curtain, or more often a matting screen; here the women sit. As many women frequented the mosques who were afraid of going to the other gatherings, papers were written exhorting women to stand firm to the dream of Persian independence, and were read to those gathered behind the screens in the mosques. This was a very unusual procedure, and men getting to know of it demanded that they might see and read these papers. Instead of condemning the progressive spirit of the women, it was said in the *Majlis*: "The women teach us how to love our land."

After finding their voice and power in this way, dozens

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of women's political societies came into existence, controlled by a central organization. There was an inquiry bureau where someone was always in attendance to answer questions and explain matters to any interested women. Several newspapers were published, two of which, *Blossom* and *The Tongue of the Women*, I have seen regularly, and have also been asked to write articles for insertion in them. An interesting feature of these papers was the way in which scraps of news concerning women in politics in England and elsewhere were got hold of, translated and inserted. Lady Astor excited great interest. I knew the editor of *The Tongue of the Women* very well, and valued her friendship. She was the daughter of a *mujtahid*, the highest dignitary among Muhammadan divines. They are generally men of strong personality and have much influence. Consequently this, his only daughter, was well educated and remarkably well informed. Her marriage had been a very unfortunate one, and she knew much of the social and moral evil which for centuries has hindered Persian progress.

At one time the mullās of Isfahān ordered the cessation of the publication of her newspaper, but the British Consul and the Governor opposed them, and the paper went on with its enlightening work.

For some time a society existed with a membership of several thousands called "The Iron Society of Persia," the object of which was social democracy, and the political strengthening and purifying of Persia, which was to be largely brought about by the help and guidance of Britain. To this society both men and women belonged. Those on the central council never met and scarcely knew who their fellows were, yet each was consulted about all matters of procedure and

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development, and each was the chief of another circle. In consequence of this society, religious liberty, freedom of thought and friendliness were on the increase wherever there were members. I was more than once asked to go to some of their meetings.

Another patriotic effort, and this entirely a women's show, interested me very much. The instigator was a Persian who had taken her diploma at the American school in Teheran, and was in charge of a Government school for girls in Isfahān. After the Armistice her great idea was to start what she wished to call an "Anglo-Persian Sisters' Union." Her idea was for English and Persian women to work in pairs; they were to meet once or twice a week and talk over what could be done to help Persia's women. Then each couple was to lead a circle composed of Persian women, as the English ones were too few to go round. She and I met constantly and talked the scheme over. We drafted the rules, designed the seal, decided on the heading for the note-paper, and hoped that the union would soon be at work in Teheran, Isfahān and Shiraz. It was somewhat hurriedly arranged for me to leave Persia that spring, and I had to leave the working out of the plans to the one who had suggested it all. I shall never forget an incident in connection with this scheme. My Persian friend was very anxious to consult the chief of the "Iron Society" as to its members becoming members of the new union. Several letters passed between them, but those from the lady came through my hands to the Englishman in charge of the telegraph department in Julfa and then to the Persian man. His letters came back through the same channels. After several letters had passed, my protégée asked me to return the man's letters to him and to ask him to return hers. Next an interview was arranged at the telegraph



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house, by kind permission of the Englishman. He and the Persian and I were all awaiting the arrival of the lady from her school in Isfahān, three miles away. It was a very windy day, she could not walk alone and she did not want anyone but one friend to know her errand. She hired a horse and rode over alone, almost an unheard-of thing for a Persian woman. I was out waiting for her, and she arrived with her chādar flying in the wind, looking very white, but very determined on her venture. With her veil held tightly down, I took her into the drawing-room, where she sat so that the Persian could not see her, and for about an hour they talked hard about what could be done to help Persia, and very specially what its women could do in the matter. When one heard an intelligent and educated woman talking to a man who also possessed these advantages as to the uplift of their country, one had a vision of what might be, if only they could and would really work together. The discussion reached a deadlock when the man insisted that the women could not work alone; they could do nothing unless they were helped by the men. Many of Persia's women do not agree, because they know what the help of Persia's men is worth. For the present, separate work seems the only possible thing; but some of the women maintain, and I agree with them, that their wisest plan is to go ahead and show what they can do. The day will come when the men will ask for their help.

## CHAPTER XXV

### THE FUTURE OF PERSIAN WOMANHOOD

**A**FTER spending so much time and thought on the Persian woman and her attitude to life in the past and present, it seems fitting that we should consider her future. For this, however, we have very little data to go upon; all we have to guide us is the present trend of thought and action, and for the rest, surmise.

It is certain that nations that are just awaking to the possibilities which their place in the world offers them will go ahead much more quickly than nations have done in the centuries that are past. This is specially true of the women of a nation; they learn what other women have done, and are keen to discover by what road they have travelled to reach their goal.

Though the women are handicapped at every turn, some of them, in spite of their heredity and environment, see through the surrounding darkness a vision of woman's heritage, of her joys, her duties and her responsibilities. Like so many other lands, Persia has its women's movement; not a vast, organized movement, it is true, but groups here and there whose aim is progress.

We have considered the various races and classes of women, their houses, food, clothes, amusements, occupations, customs and religions. Everything concerning them seems to come short somewhere. What is needed to help these women to make good, to enthuse them with

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a longing for their inheritance? The lives of women in the East have been lived at a dead level for centuries. Something is needed to change this level, to give it an "upward reach," that they in their turn may be able to give to their native lands what they so much need, and what none but women can give.

Two outstanding needs are, for leaders and for social reconstruction. But neither of these is likely to be forthcoming until Persia's women are educated. Hence we must put as their primary need that of education, not merely book learning, but education of heart and mind. A Christian education would do more for the women and girls of Persia than any other one thing. A secular education alone is rarely given in a Moslem land. Teaching in Persia is mainly given by the *religieuse* of the various faiths prevailing in the country. We have seen what a Moslem education has to offer. Parsis, Armenians and Jews all believe in education for boys, and are beginning to see that girls also need it.

Missions, American and English, have done more than any other agency to offer a sound secular education, and that founded on Christianity. It is remarkable how all our advanced and improved methods of life and learning are put down by the Persians to our religion. I am referring to all Westerners, who are as a body considered to be Christians.

At the present time in Persia we are up against a comparatively new problem, and that is the new cult of Bahaism. This took its rise in Shiraz during the first half of the last century. For many years it was a secret sect, but this secrecy is fast disappearing, and now Bahais are people to be reckoned with in any matters concerning morals and religion in the land of the Shah.

Much has been written about this sect, especially by

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Professor Browne. Its third leader, Abdul Behar, visited England and America in 1912, and spoke and taught and attracted adherents to this new teaching. He and his predecessors are buried at Acca in Palestine, and his grandson, Shogi Effendi, whom he appointed as his successor, was at the time of Abdul Behar's death in 1922 an undergraduate at Oxford.

What has this sect to do with the future of Persia's womanhood? Baha'ism is a development of Islām. It claims to be a world-wide religion, capable of embracing and unifying all other faiths, along new lines—*e.g.* Jews who become Baha'is accept Jesus as their Messiah, but also accept Muhammad and the Baha'i leader. It teaches unity, brotherhood, tolerance and peace. It stands for equality of the sexes and for the education of women, two very big things when we think of the women as they have been for centuries and are to-day, down-trodden and untaught. Those girls who go to Baha'i schools will most probably eventually adopt this faith, as it has much to offer women. Similarly those who go to Christian schools will be attracted by the truths and ideals of Christianity. As we have seen, the people are out for education, and they are more than likely to be attracted by the religion which offers the best education, and that certainly is not Islām.

Talking one day to some educated Persian women about the need for their efforts for their country, one of them said: "You Englishwomen have knowledge and education, and we have neither; how can we work for the advancement of our country?"

Next let us think of the great need for leaders. These must be Persian women knowing and understanding their own people. Western women can help and advise, but the permanent leadership cannot be in their hands.

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If a new Persia is to be set up, various forces, at present latent, will be needed, and second to none is the power of its womanhood. This can scarcely be called a latent force, except in the direction of ennobling and uplifting, and it is in these directions that women must become a living force.

Custom, outlook and the lack of public opinion, all lessen the physical and moral strength of the nation. If ever the tide is to be turned, all that Christian education, legislation, public opinion and intense individual effort can do will be needed.

No one could read the Qu'ran and the Traditions, or spend twenty years among the women of Persia, without realizing the tremendous need that exists for their emancipation. This must come sooner or later, and those who love them want them to be prepared for it. So much of Persia's future is bound up with the development of its women; at present the position, which according to Islām is their *kismet*, is one which more than any one other thing is keeping Persia in a backwater. How can she rise above the level of her womanhood? It is a moral impossibility. An educated Persian once said to me: "Persia can never go forward until her women are different; they are keeping the race back." But whose fault is it if they are? Little help can be hoped for from that direction, and it is only as the women's own eyes are opened and their hearts uplifted that they will be worthy of, and that they will ask for, and expect, and bring about a different state of things. They are intelligent and alert, their energy has been conserved by being quiescent for generations, they possess influence; what they need is to learn how to use their powers for the uplifting of the race.

In the prevailing social condition of the country,

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professions are valueless to women. Every girl must marry, and must spend the rest of her life more or less in seclusion. How can she be a doctor or an educationist, an artist, an author, or a musician? The only callings open to women are such things as domestic service, attendants at the public baths, needlecraft of various kinds, and the cleaning or weaving of cotton, tobacco and wool, all very necessary occupations, but calling for no outstanding ability. Persians only work if wage-earning is a necessity. No one goes in for a career. But there are many evidences that Persia's women are moving. May their movement be towards the desired goal. Miss A. I. Stuart, who has known Persia for nearly thirty years, writing from Kashan in January 1923, says: "There are great changes in Persia . . . some things are an improvement, notably the long skirts in women's indoor dress which are now the fashion . . . all the smarter and younger women now wear skirts just about the length of ours . . . the result is pleasing. The thirst for education and advancement of every sort grows, and in upper circles the very early marriages are not so universal. Girls want to stop on at school, and often the parents are quite agreeable to this, and in the case of some it is made an excuse for remaining unmarried altogether, for which there is a growing desire on the part of girls."

I have recently heard of a girl whom I know who has been engaged in school work for some years, and who is now going to America to study medicine; another is in India, and I know of three who talk of coming to England, and of others who long to do the same. If a few enlightened Persian women were forthcoming, burning with love for their country, who could take a special training in religion, medicine or pedagogy, and so

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fit themselves to work among their own people, it is difficult to gauge the results which would follow. It certainly would be the beginning of a far-reaching and ever-widening effort for the uplifting of Persian womanhood. The women who have attempted public work, education, nursing or social service, be they Armenian, Jewish, Parsi or Moslem, have proved to themselves and to others that they have intelligence, adaptability and perseverance, and many of them a very real appreciation of the opportunities open to them.

Numbers of girls are working in the hospitals and, judging from those who have preceded them, they not only understand nursing and dispensing, but home-making, one of Persia's greatest needs.

There are various agencies at work in the hope of helping women to make good; among them the Mothers' Union has branches in different towns, and has an Armenian deaconess working among the carpet-weavers of Kirman. She is a trained nurse and has several weekly clinics for Moslem women of various classes, which are largely attended and increasingly appreciated. There is a large branch of the Mothers' Union among the Armenian women of Julfa. They have a great idea of sharing the help they get with others.

Contact with Western women, especially British and American, is doing much for Persia's women. They welcome opportunities of meeting and discussing things about which we know so much more than they do. They know that they are in a backwater, and many of them long to get into the stream, and appreciate all that can be done to help them to get there. The numbers of women, Armenian, Jewish, Parsi and Moslem, who have taken up education have had their own outlook entirely altered, and are, and will be, an increasing power in the

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land. Women are learning to be unselfish, loving, pure and strong, and only so can they help their fellows and help to bring about the social reconstruction which their country so sorely needs.

The following verses were written by my young friend who wished to start the Anglo-Persian Sisters' Union. She wrote them first in Persian and then translated them. A very few verbal changes only have been made.

## A CRY FOR LIBERTY

O my sorrowful heart ! rise and praise liberty  
Till thou mayest move freely in the realms of liberty.

We must not grow weary in the struggle of the world ;  
The blood of the heart should be given as the price of liberty.

There will be many struggles in this field  
Before thou canst lead forth the captives towards liberty.

Ask every moment that Almighty God  
May become thy leader in the founding of liberty.

Leave this body, even get rid of it,  
Put thy head and thy life in thy hand for liberty.

Every minute from Paradise comes a joyful song,  
It is nothing, O Zahed ! but the tune of liberty.

Knowest thou not, O fool ! that throughout the world  
Streams of blood have flown for the cause of liberty ?

In the spirit of liberty is eternal life ;  
Lo ! thou offerest thy mortal body for liberty.

O thou sorrowful heart ! how long shalt thou cry behind the veil ?  
Tear aside the curtain and attain liberty.

Like the silkworm leave thou the cocoon,  
And like the moth float in the air of liberty.



## CHAPTER XXVI

### THE ENGLISHWOMAN IN PERSIA

THE Westerners who spend much of their lives in India, China or Japan are far more numerous than those who spend it in the old land of Persia. But for those who have made Persia their home for a few years it often has an extraordinary fascination. "Dear old Persia"—"How I long for my Persian years over again"—"I would give anything to go back again"—"One's heart is in the dear old country, I often long to be there again"—is the kind of feeling left in many minds. May we try to find out in what the attraction lies? Having made the journey to or from Persia eight times, by five different routes, I know how extraordinarily tiresome and difficult it is. When you are settled in the country, there are few of the modern luxuries or excitements of life to be had at any price. Transport is slow and difficult. Even when the postal service is working fairly well it is remarkably slow, and sometimes it breaks down entirely, as it did in 1918, when for ten months there were practically no English mails. Society is very limited, music and art and literature are all restricted, shopping as known in Europe is not! In what does the charm of Persia lie, to the Western woman?

The brilliant sky and clear atmosphere, the warmth and the sunshine. The ease of running a house, the freedom of life in general. The friendliness of other

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Europeans and Americans. The foreign communities vary in different places, but my experience has been that it is the exception in Persia for an Englishwoman to live a European life, cut off from everything native, as is often the case in Eastern lands, with their hill stations and treaty ports. The majority of Englishwomen find much of the interest of life in its Persian setting. Some appreciate this to the extent that they spend a great deal of time in sketching. Others find real interest in the history or folk-lore or legend or art or poetry of the people, and others in the people themselves.

A good house and garden are easy to procure in Persia, and riding may be enjoyed all the year round.

There are plenty of tennis courts, hard ones, and devotees of the game, or of badminton, can get as much play as they want. Dinner-parties and other social functions are numerous; amateur theatricals, magazine clubs, reading circles and bridge are all to be had.

There are some women who mope in Persia, but they would probably do it wherever their lot was cast. The altitude and the extreme dryness of the air on the central plateau, or the excessive moisture of the Caspian provinces and the Persian Gulf ports, are not appreciated by everyone, but on the whole "Persia is a white man's land," as our soldiers said when they came to Persia from Mesopotamia. The summer is much hotter and the winter colder than in England, and what is such a surprise to new-comers is that there are never samples of all the seasons in one week. The bad weather in Central Persia is all compressed into the three months from Christmas to the Persian New Year. Seven months without rain is quite usual.

Women who take most interest in the people of the country where they make their homes get the most out

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of their lives there. At first many are inclined to think that the native is a wonderful person; after a time their opinion changes, and he is looked upon as all that is bad; but in the end most people come to the conclusion that he is not at all such a bad fellow after all, and that his country and his customs are of interest.

Very much depends on the reason which has taken a woman to Persia as to what sort of life she leads. If her husband is in the diplomatic or consular service she will have opportunities of seeing a good deal of leading Persians, when at receptions and dinners, and as much as she likes of their womenfolk in their own houses. Wives of other Government and bank officials and of merchants may also see as much of Persian life as they wish.

Women missionaries and the wives of missionaries put contact with the native as the first item on their programme, and take every opportunity, in hospital, dispensary, school or home, of getting to know and understand and so help the people.

There are other women who teach or practise medicine, governesses and nurses in English families, grown-up daughters who after coming to England for education have gone back to live with their parents in Persia, many of whom marry Englishmen and settle down in their adopted land. Such people are often inclined to say that life in Persia is dull, but they realize afterwards, if not at the time, that it has many compensations.

In most of Persia's large towns there are delightful houses to be had; many of them belong to various Government departments and banks, others are rented.

A Persian house is a good foundation for an English home. As a rule it is open and spacious, with verandahs

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and a garden. It is quite possible to get nice furniture made, couches, wardrobes, chests of drawers, in fact an Armenian or Persian carpenter will copy anything from an illustration, and it is astonishing how homelike many of the houses become. Carpets and curtains, cushions and kitchen utensils, trays and other things are produced locally. House linen, lamps, china, glass and silver are usually of Western origin, either brought out by their owners, or bought at exorbitant prices in the bāzār.

It is extraordinary what an amount of belongings some people bring out with them. Those who come with very little save themselves much trouble, and as a rule are able to pick up various things from other Europeans who are leaving, and who generally sell off most of their household and personal possessions, as they never know to what part of the country they are likely to return. It is amusing how people will say: "When you go home, will you let me have that hat, or evening frock?"—"Will you sell your entrée dishes and mincing machine when you leave? If so, may I have them?"—"Are you going to sell that nice chesterfield? I want one very badly." After a few years spent at home and abroad it is difficult to say what one has possessed, and where those possessions are now, books, pictures, clothes and other things change hands so often.

I have always found Persian servants to be very satisfactory, and can only remember two or three who were not so. It is not necessary to keep a great number as it is in India. For an ordinary house, unless there are children, or much entertaining, three indoor servants generally manage very well. As a rule the cook does all the buying of food and anything that his mistress needs, while the tableman will do his master's shopping. Most of the washing up, sweeping, and drawing of water

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will fall to the *sherbet-dar*, really a pantry-boy. The men like to go home every day to see that all is right in their own houses. It gave me something of a shock, when I first had a house of my own in Persia, to find that all the men had gone off directly after lunch. I thought they didn't like their new mistress, but soon discovered that it was all right, and that after two or three hours they came back. One man is always on the premises at night.

There are excellent cooks to be had, both Persian and Armenian, and native food, with additions from the English contents of the storeroom, gives all that one can wish. A good tableman is very quick and smart, and quiet over his work. I had one boy who delighted in studying the ways of folding serviettes as described by Mrs Beeton, and one day he showed me with great pride his newest production, which was a serviette folded to represent a Persian shirt! Their ideas of table decoration are not always the same as ours, though this particular boy grasped the idea of a colour scheme. Sometimes they make a pattern, in the centre of the table, of roses without their stalks, or there may be pyramids of fruit fastened together by twigs. As a rule one prefers to see such things in Persian houses, and if a man is told that such a thing is our custom he is anxious to keep to it.

It is easy to get women for bedroom work, and for washing and sewing. There is one thing that a Persian sewing woman likes to do better than anything else, and that is to patch. They have little idea of darning, their one way of repairing being a patch, whether it be a stocking or a tablecloth. As Persians never wear shoes in the house, their stockings wear out very quickly, and double soles or patches are soon needed. They are very

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willing to learn, and I have had some excellent darning done after a few lessons.

The washing, ironing and airing is often all done in the open air, in a secluded corner of the garden or compound, and very well done too.

When there are children in a family, even if they have an English nurse, or if the mother manages them herself, native help is generally needed. Both men and women are good with European children; they are kind and patient, but inclined to give in to them and to spoil them, and they need a great deal of supervision. The question of morals, too, is a very serious one, and the less that English children are left alone with natives the better.

In many parts of Persia the climate and conditions of life make it possible to keep children in the country, though on account of education and environment boys and girls ought to be out of Persia before they are eight. During the war many had to remain until they were twelve or fourteen, and fortunately seemed little the worse for it.

Persian servants soon find out whether a mistress understands prices and the general running of a house. Once, on going to live in a new place, friends had engaged servants for us. When we arrived, everything was very nice, and an excellent and abundant dinner was served. The next morning when I interviewed the cook there was nothing left, and his accounts were quite double what they ought to have been. I told him that this was not my first time of coming to Persia, that I knew both customs and prices. He never tried the experiment again, and was with me for several years.

It is easier, unless a mistress has a good knowledge of the language, to show how a thing should be done

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than to explain the operation, be it dusting, cooking, or anything else.

Colloquial Persian is easy and soon picked up; it is a help, however, to learn to read, as everything becomes plainer. I have made and heard very stupid mistakes—*e.g.* the word for brush is *jarūb* and for stocking *jurāb*, and in my early days I more than once told the woman to darn the brushes, and the man to treat the carpet with a stocking. I once heard a lady telling her cook to get a couple of donkeys and cook them for lunch. He was very obstinate, and I was glad to be able to put matters right. *Ulagh* is donkey and *urdak* is duck. One day I asked a Persian visitor how many years it had taken her to get from her village, four miles away, into Shiraz, meaning how many hours. *Sal* is year and *saat* hour. And someone else to whom the language was new asked a grand lady if she were a cat, instead of asking if she had a cat! Persians as a rule are very good about the mistakes of foreigners and seldom laugh at them; they are wonderfully quick in understanding not what you say but what you *want* to say!

Persian gardens, though so very different from English ones, are a great joy. It is almost impossible, owing to the heat, or the mud, or the hardness of the ground, to work in a garden oneself, but the native gardener is very willing to do what he is told. English seeds do well, but one can be more sure of Persian ones. In the late spring and early summer roses are the chief joy; they are just exquisite, and grow in the greatest profusion. Jasmine, gelder roses, broom, irises, poppies, cosmos, pansies, stocks, petunias, verbena, hollyhocks, geraniums, chrysanthemums and many other familiar flowers are all to be found.

The orange gardens are very attractive, and the

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vineyards, when the vines are in flower, have a ravishing perfume.

The peach-trees with their deep pink blossoms, the glossy pomegranate-trees with their waxy scarlet bell flowers, besides the blossoms of all the other fruit trees, contribute to the beauty of the spring; and there is never any difficulty in making one's house bright with flowers, the only drawback is that in the summer they barely last a day. Except in the rainy districts in the north, nothing grows wild; there are no hedges or woods or commons. The country is really desert or garden, and little grows unless artificially watered, except in the spring; then for a few weeks the hills and plains are gay with flowers. Besides our familiar wild flowers, I have seen wild gladioli, hollyhocks, crocuses and lilies. On some of the bare hill-sides blue thistles give a lovely touch of colour.

Picnics are a very favourite form of entertainment, and often take place in the winter and spring. Bachelors will sometimes give a picnic specially for the European ladies, as being simpler than a dinner, but certainly a great deal more trouble. A big Persian will lend them a garden with a house in it, but everything has to be sent out, carpets, crockery, food and so on. The servants generally enjoy these functions, especially when their bachelor masters give them a free hand.

Some picnics will be arranged for very early or late in the day. For instance, from Isfahān, the guests may meet for breakfast at seven-thirty at a little ruin called the "white house" on the side of Kuh-i-sufi, or the White Mountain. This means riding or driving or bicycling the first three miles, and then a climb. After a substantial breakfast everyone sets out for the top of the mountain, but not everybody gets there! It is a stiff climb and may



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take two hours, but it is rewarded by views of hundreds of miles of surrounding country. The descent is worse than the ascent, but takes less time, and we get down to the "white house," have some light refreshment, and are at home by midday and so escape the heat.

Or a picnic may be arranged for a moonlight night in the summer, when a cold supper or even a hot dinner may be served in a cave, of which there are many in the hills a few miles from the city.

The arrival and departure of Europeans are also occasions for picnics. It is difficult to be sure at what time travellers may arrive, but as a rule a short stage will be done on the last morning, and those who wish to welcome them will ride or drive out to a caravanserai ten or twelve miles from the town. Here lunch is prepared, everybody contributing something, and while some wait here, others go on until they meet the travellers and bring them in in triumph.

If they are well-known people, or coming to occupy some post of importance, many natives will ride or walk out to meet them, and sometimes by the time the town is reached there may be hundreds in the procession.

Persians as a nation are devoted to poetry, and much of their exquisite national poetry attracts Westerners. When you are in Persia you realize that Omar Khayyām casts no spell over his own people. Probably Firduzi, the great epic poet, who died in 1023, takes first place, and Nizamé comes next. The Sufi poets, Sādi, Hafiz, Jāmi and Jalal-u-dīn are all very popular, and good translations of their poems are to be had, and much can be learnt about a nation from its poetry.

The early poets have many entrancing stories, such as the loves of Khosro and Shireen, of Leila and Majnūn, of

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Zuleika and Yussuf, but in later works the influence of Islām has been felt and women are rarely mentioned.

A Persian theatre is not very exciting, but such do exist, and they are certainly amusing. The only one I have been to was in Resht. The place was full of men, I was the only woman, and the actors were all men, and were amateurs. The title of the play was *Betrothed, Worse Luck!*

Those to whom the past greatness of Persia appeals will delight in the traces which still remain. The modern Hamadan with the tombs of Esther and Mordecai is the ancient Ecbatana, the capital of Ahasuerus or Artaxerxes and his Queen Esther. The miles of ruins of the ancient Susa or Shusan, and the reputed tomb of the prophet Daniel, some miles to the west of Shuster, are of more interest than beauty, also what remains of the still more ancient Rhages, near Teheran.

Near Shahpoor, about eighty miles west of Shiraz, there is a sculpture representing the Emperor Shahpoor holding the Roman Emperor Valerian prisoner.

Carved on the great rock above the road, at Behistūn, between Hamadan and Bagdad, we get the history of Darius the Great, as recorded by himself. The ruins of the capital of Cyrus and Cambyses are at Pasargadæ, thirty-eight miles N.E. from Shiraz. Here I saw the winged figure of Cyrus with its trilingual inscription: "I am Cyrus the Great, the Achæmenian"; also the mausoleum of Cyrus; and near by at Nakshi Rostam are the beautifully carved rock tombs of, in all probability, Darius I., Xerxes, Artaxerxes and Darius II. There are also relics of Zoroastrianism in the fire temple and altars, and platforms for exposing the dead, and the wonderful sculptures.

The finest ruins are those of Persepolis, or, as they

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are called, *Takht-i-Jamsheed*, or the throne of Jamsheed, one of Persia's earliest rulers, though Persepolis was probably built by Darius the Great, added to by Xerxes and finished by Artaxerxes. Here we see the hall of Cyrus with its lofty fluted pillars, and the palace of Darius. There are broad and shallow stairways up which a horse and rider can easily go, wonderful carvings representing all sorts of courageous deeds and early customs—e.g. the worship of fire and the bringing of New Year gifts. The Feast of the New Year was established by Jamsheed. As one wanders about these vast ruins, which have been lying, much as they are to-day, since the fire which destroyed the wonderful piles was kindled, probably by Alexander the Great, people follow you about asking if you will show them where all the treasures are hidden. They are sure that such treasures exist and that foreigners know where to find them. A few scraps of carved stone and a wonderful memory of what the long-past glories of Persia must have been was all the treasure that I brought away on either of my visits. On the face of the rock on the mountain-side above the vast platform are the rock tombs of the kings.

The remarkable sculptures at *Tauk-e-Bustan*, near *Kermanshah*, look as though Greek or Roman artists had influenced, if not helped in, the work. Here, again, the *Pehlevi* inscriptions, as well as the carvings, refer largely to *Zoroaster* and his creed.

This chapter is not a compressed history or geography, or even a guide-book, of Persia, but merely a glance at what Persia offers to the Western woman. Some are anxious to take all she offers, others want none of it.

Persian cities differ very much in their presentation

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of native life and in the European society they offer. Teheran, the capital, looking north and west and not sure from which source most is to be gained, has better roads and bāzārs and is in many ways more advanced than other places. All the legations are here, and many interesting people are to be met with; the European community is large and varied; there are good shops, hotels and clubs, and even cinemas!

Shiraz, an ancient capital, has been, with other towns, Hamadan, Tabriz, Kirman and Kazveen, much influenced by the presence of troops during the last few years. Shiraz is the home of poetry and wine, of the nightingale and the rose. Here the Europeans are very few, and women are thrown much more on their own resources. Isfahān is less affected by the changes that are coming over the country, and Persia as she was in the past can well be studied by those who have the desire. The English colony here is usually a very friendly one, and life can be well worth living from every point of view.

In towns where there are missionaries, regular Sunday services are held either in a mission church or house. In some places the British Consul arranges for a service at the Consulate. Here for some years the American Presbyterians have had an Anglican service on Sunday, at which at one time Sir Percy Cox always read the lessons. There are Roman Catholic churches in Teheran and Julfa.

Every year sees some improvement in the means of transport, in the goods in the bāzārs, and in the general life of the country, resulting from its contact with the West.

Of one thing I am sure, that every Western woman who spends a few months or years in the country, and

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who gets in touch with its women, and by her own conduct and attitude to life shows what her ideals are, will be helping to bring about the social reconstruction and the "upward reach" of which Persia stands so urgently in need.

## CHAPTER XXVII

### HOLIDAYS & JOURNEY HOME

THOSE who like travelling, as well as those who hate it but must perforce do it, get plenty of it in Persia, as few people, whatever their occupation, spend all their time in one place. Some most interesting books about Persia have been written by women who have described their journeying experiences. Personally I love crossing its deserts at night, with the marvellous sapphire sky studded with stars, which as the dawn comes on seem to be wiped off, leaving only the morning star on a pale, cloudless sky. When it is neither too hot nor too cold, I enjoy crossing a mountain range by day. The air is so clear that the views are marvellous. Sometimes a perfect panorama of mountains may be seen one behind the other.

In most parts of Persia it is possible to go for the hot weather to a mountain village, or to some beautiful garden a few miles from the town. If the party is a large one, the latter is the easier plan. We have spent summers in gardens near Shiraz, Julfa and Isfahān, and have very much appreciated the cleaner, fresher air, and the quietness and freedom of the life for a few weeks. To one such garden house we took out twenty-seven donkey-loads of furniture, stores and clothes, besides many tray-loads of crockery, glass and lamps.

One summer we went *en famille* to a delightful village sixty or seventy miles S.W. from Isfahān. We started

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at five P.M. on Tuesday evening and got to our destination at midnight on Saturday! We had sent a messenger some weeks before to engage a house, and on the Saturday morning sent our head servant on to see that it was swept and empty. To our dismay he met us just outside the village, saying that he had been held up by robbers, and that when he reached the village the owner of the house had some relatives from a distance staying with him, and that we could not have it, but he had made arrangements for us for the night, and that he would find a house for us the next day. After many inspections and discussions quite a comfortable big native house was put at our disposal, the occupants turning out and taking up their abode in two rooms at the entrance to the garden.

Another year we went to a beautiful camping ground under some immense walnut-trees about thirty miles from Shiraz. We took tents and a guard of four Persian soldiers. We had all our meals in the open air, and usually had a distant crowd of spectators, and felt very much as though we were inhabitants of the Zoo. When we heard that no English woman or child had ever been in this village before, we felt that their interest and curiosity were excusable. Crowds of people used to come and beg for medicines, and it was useless to tell them that I was not a doctor, so after making a list of their ailments I retired into the tent and studied a medicine book, and then gave them each something. One day there were some very nice-looking women, and I said that I should like to take a photograph of them. They were delighted, and fifteen or sixteen of them put on their most attractive looks. When I got my camera ready, what was my surprise to find only six old women sitting there; the others had all crept off, and the old

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women said the husbands of the young women would be angry if anyone else saw their wives' faces, even in a picture.

In 1917 my husband and I decided to go for our holiday to Soh, a mountain village 7500 feet above sea-level, and about sixty miles from Isfahān. We considered the various modes of travelling—a carriage would have cost £25 for two of us for sixty miles, and animals for the loads would have been extra, so we decided to travel in *pālākis* on a pony, which, with animals for our servants and loads, would cost £11. After many delays we started from our house in Isfahān at five P.M. on 26th July. The *pālākis* were like very roughly constructed arm-chairs tied together and thrown over the pack-saddle of the animal. The mattresses for the camp-beds were put into the *pālākis*, and made them comfortable. One servant rode my bicycle, another sat on half-a-load, on a pony, and the rest of our properties were carried on three other ponies. One began by being very tiresome and trying to throw its load, and we had an hour's ride through narrow streets and crowded bāzārs. Outside the city gate, first one load and then another fell off, as the muleteer had fastened them on so badly. In the first load that fell was a box containing lamps and four large bottles of paraffin. Sad to say, the fine glass lamp which was to adorn our dinner-table while we were away was smashed to atoms, and much of the oil was spilt. We jogged on, and in five hours did thirteen miles! At ten P.M. we rode into the courtyard of a huge caravanserai in which were hundreds of animals, all with bells on their trappings; some had twenty bells round their necks, and others had bells eighteen inches high, slung across their saddles, all of which gave forth a ceaseless jingle-jangle, especially as most of the



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animals had their nose-bags on. There were a great many muleteers with them, some eating and drinking round a big wood fire, others curry-combing their mules, and most of them shouting and making a terrific dust and noise. We, like the other travellers, dumped down our loads and ourselves in a corner, and tried to make the best of things. A little verandah was swept and our mattresses put there. The samovar was brought, and we had tea and cold rissoles and bread, which we much enjoyed. Then we tried to sleep, but my efforts ended with trying. I wish I could reproduce the disturbances. About midnight the muleteers began to rub down their animals, some very much objecting to this, and plunging and rearing, and their masters shouting and swearing. About two A.M. they began to load up. Most of the loads were bound for Teheran, and consisted of tea, sugar, oil and cotton. By three A.M. we were the only people left in the caravanserai. Up to three A.M. is considered a bad time for travelling, as robbers are then abroad. We were anxious to start when the caravans did, but our servants were enjoying their sleep, and it was five-thirty before we got off. This was much too late, as we had a long stage of twenty-two miles over hot, open country. Though we only stopped two or three minutes to drink some tea from a thermos, an impossible feat when the pony was moving, it was after midday before we got to our stopping-place. All I wanted then was some cold water and to be allowed to go to sleep under a mosquito net, where I slept until four-thirty, on the floor of a tiny room in another big caravanserai. This was one of the fine old brick and stone buildings put up by Shah Abbas the Great three hundred years ago, and had spacious roofs and a very large, open court. Here there were hundreds of mules; some were beautiful animals. They were tethered in lines and nearly

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all covered with striped saddle-cloths, which made them look like zebras. My husband went to see the headman of the village, and I sat outside the caravanserai and talked to various women who came along. There were a number of pilgrims on the road. One party consisted of a blind woman, a lame boy with a very badly deformed foot, and two other women. They had set themselves the task of walking over these dry, scorching desert roads for hundreds of miles to Meshed, in the hope that it would bring them merit. They were of course begging their way. Another woman said she had done the journey three times, and another, an Arab woman, had gone to Bagdad and was there during the siege, and had now come to visit various sacred places in the north of Persia.

The headman of the village advised us to start about ten minutes after the caravans, as the first part of the road was considered unsafe. We settled ourselves on the roof where it was clean and cool, had our dinner and slept comfortably until two A.M., when we set off, as advised, in the wake of the caravans. For the first two hours it was perfectly dark, except for the brilliant stars, but the ponies and mules seem to see as well by starlight as by sunlight. We jogged along hour after hour over an enormous plain, slightly uphill and very sandy. I tried bicycling, but was very glad to get back into the *pālāki*, as the heat and dust were overpowering. The road from the Persian Gulf had been closed for some time and had only recently been reopened, consequently the caravans were legion. We could often see six at a time in front or behind, many consisting of forty or fifty or more mules or donkeys.

This stage took us nine hours, and at last we got to Dr Carr's delightful holiday home at Soh, which he

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had very kindly lent to us until we could find one for ourselves.

Soh is a large village right up among the mountains, the houses lying on a hill-side. The water supply is as a rule good, but it is seldom sufficient for all the fields, so one year the ground on one side of the village is cultivated and the next year the other side. The harvest was fairly good, but, on account of the thousands of animals and muleteers camping there each day, the demand for food for man and beast was tremendous, and the prices had soared accordingly. Bread was sixpence a pound; sheep's butter, three and ninepence; soft sugar, two and ninepence; paraffin, two and tenpence a quart; candles, fourpence each; all meat—goat, lamb or venison—eightpence a pound; eggs, one penny each, and vegetables and fruit unprocurable. Fortunately we had taken supplies of many things with us.

After a few hours' rest we set off to look for a house, as Dr and Mrs Carr were coming to theirs in a few days. We saw six houses, but only one that was possible. That one was new; it had three rooms, but these were only half finished. The next day we inspected several more, but with no better luck. Some were very close to the caravan camping grounds, some we could only have half of; all were dirty, and none had any kind of water supply, and we regretted that we had not brought tents. Passing a gateway in a high mud wall, we asked what was inside, and the man who was acting as our guide said it was only a garden and had no house. This turned out to be a mistake; but the owner, who was a Sayyid, had refused to let it to other Europeans who had wanted it, and our guide did not like to tell us this. However, as we were going, the owner appeared and said we might have it. He invited us in, and it was just like a farm-

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yard, buildings at either end, a dozen mulberry and pear trees in the middle, and cows and calves, and cocks and hens, and babies, everywhere. There was a well, but it had not been used for years, and a bucket of evil-smelling water was drawn up for our inspection. We went away and thought it over, and finally decided that if the owner would have the well cleaned out and the whole place emptied and swept, and a most disreputable stable turned into a kitchen, that we would take it at a rent of £3, 12s. for a month. The Sayyid agreed, and we moved in two days later, but found that most of the clearing away of rubbish and general sweeping had been left for us to do. The small storerooms at one end of the compound were to be used as dressing-rooms, and we were to sleep outside. In one of these there was an enormous jar of barley. The Sayyid's servants, before they left, shut up three cows in this room, and when we found them they had eaten forty pounds of the barley. The owner came, and took it quite calmly, turned the cows out and filled up the jar again, saying he knew the *sabib* would not eat it!

The house and compound took a long time to lose their native smell, but regular watering and sweeping did a great deal. The well turned out to be an excellent one and we were able to supply our neighbours with drinking water.

I meant to sleep on the roof, but there were no steps and the promised ladder was not forthcoming, so I had my camp-bed put under the trees. The second night I was awakened by a great noise of knocking and shovelling, and found that it was the night for the garden to be watered, and the waterways were being opened. I called out to know how long it would be before the water reached me and was told half-an-hour,

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so, preferring not to be disturbed again, I got up, and had my bed moved to the verandah. The nights were lively, with crows overhead and cats and goats around my bed. We were in the village, and everyone at that time of the year was sleeping outside, many on the roofs, and I found the crying babies and their talkative and often coughing elders very trying. Besides, it was a very quarrelsome village, and often there were nocturnal fights as well as daylight ones.

The great charm of Soh consists in its fifty or sixty large walnut-trees which are scattered about the hill-side, at the foot of which the village is built. I spent most of my mornings in a deck-chair under one of these trees, reading or sketching. There are also delightful mountain climbs to be had, and a fair amount of shooting for those who care for it. There is a shrine with a picturesque blue-tiled dome in a depression on the hill-side. This is a place of pilgrimage, and many people go to visit it. There is a spring which feeds a large tank in the precincts which has hundreds of fish in it. People catch these fish, kiss them and put them back; if anyone were to catch them and take them for food it would be considered a great sin.

From Soh we made short trips to other villages, Kuhrud and Abieuneh. When we went to the latter place the only mounts we could get were donkeys. After some miles of easy going we turned in among the mountains and went on up and up until it was too steep to ride, and walking made us very breathless. At last we got to the top of the pass, and here the aneroid registered an altitude of 10,000 feet, but the view was wonderful—mountains packed one behind the other as far as we could see, great rolling plains away on the right hand, and in front of us the steepest and most tortuous path I have ever seen,

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which was the only way down. We let the donkeys find their own way, and we were very glad when we were all safely on the road at the bottom of the mountain-side. After two nights in Abieuneh, one of which we spent on the roof of a native house, the alternative being the room occupied by the family, which they kindly offered to us, we went back to Soh by an easier road.

My journey home in 1919 with a friend was somewhat different. We had a fairly roomy carriage, with our baggage tied on behind, our small camp mattresses in the carriage to sit on, also pillows and rugs. The season was perfect for travelling. We left Isfahān at noon on 28th April, and five days later, exactly at noon, we drove into Teheran, three hundred miles distant. Our carriage was drawn by four horses which were changed every ten or twelve miles with their driver. Out of more than a hundred horses there was not one that was unsatisfactory. Our sleeping-places were not up to much: one night the ground at the entrance to a caravanserai, another night a stable roof, and another the laths of iron bedsteads on which our mattresses refused to remain.

We spent twelve days at a French hotel in Teheran, and saw a good deal of our friends and of the city while we were waiting for transport to the Caspian Sea. At last we got off, and did the first hundred miles in a Ford car, with an Indian chauffeur. We had various alarms, a collapsed wheel, punctures, and finally we were wedged on a bank of mud; but all ended well, and after two nights at Kazvene we were sent on by the kindness of Sir Percy Cox and of the G.H.Q. in two Ford cars. At the end of the first day we were held up, as the country was unsafe, and then escorted, with a number of other cars, by light armoured cars to Resht. After enjoying the kind hospitality of Mr and Mrs Eldred at the

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Consulate for a few days, we were taken on to Enzelli, where, on the shores of the Caspian Sea, a battalion of Ghurkas were encamped. After lunch at the officers' mess we went on board a funny little Russian steamer which landed us twenty-seven hours later at Baku. On this boat there were some notorious German prisoners on parole; one of them spoke English and Russian fluently, and kindly translated the menu for us; we had no idea who he was. The authorities heard of it and at once concluded that we were Germans, and we were requested to spend the night on board. Among the passengers were several British officers whom we knew, and matters were soon put right. The following day, after some shopping, we were deposited in an empty cattle truck attached to a train made up of oil tanks and cattle trucks which carried British troops and Austrian and Turkish prisoners, where we spent four nights. I never had such a weird journey. The only food we had was what we had brought with us, and bread and fruit which we were sometimes able to buy in the stations, where we also obtained water, which we boiled in the truck over a spirit lamp. We spent the first night on the floor among our baggage, but the next day some officers kindly lent us camp-beds. We spent the second night on these, and were awakened at three A.M. by most of our baggage being rolled out of the truck by train thieves. At the time it seemed heart-breaking, so much that we valued gone; and none of it was ever recovered, nor any compensation obtained. On the fourth day we reached Batoum, where by the kindness of the Base Commandant we got a room at a hotel, where we spent five nights, and most of our days we spent in trying to get berths. Here we were taken for Americans and offered a passage on a U.S.A. cargo

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boat, but as she had to put in at various Black Sea ports, we decided to go by a large transport which was carrying two thousand troops, and was an ex-Austrian boat. Three days brought us to Constantinople. I very much enjoyed the five days which we had to spend here waiting for a boat; everything was fascinating and very much changed from my first visit in 1899. There was a good deal of business to be done; we had to visit banks and shipping offices and stand for hours in queues so as to get our passports visa-ed by the representatives of I don't know how many nations. Then we had to be vaccinated, and finally obtain a *certificat d'épouillage* before we were allowed to leave the shores of Turkey! When I left for Taranto it was in a small and very dirty transport, carrying five hundred men, twelve officers, one civilian and myself. We called at Chanak, and Piræus, where we had a most tantalizing view of Athens, then, as the boat was only 1000 tons, we went through the Corinthian Canal. We had a gorgeous view of Corinth, Mount Parnassus, Delphi and, later, Ithaca, and finally on the fourth day reached Taranto. After a night in the 79th General Hospital I came via Rome and the Mount Cenis Tunnel to England and home, the journey having taken eight weeks all but a few hours. After three and a half years in England, Persia still calls.



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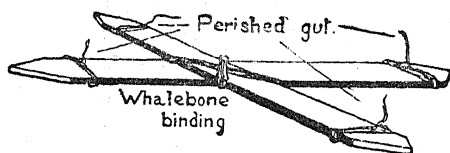
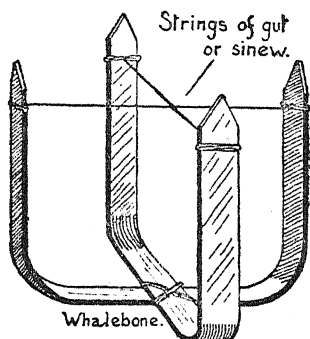
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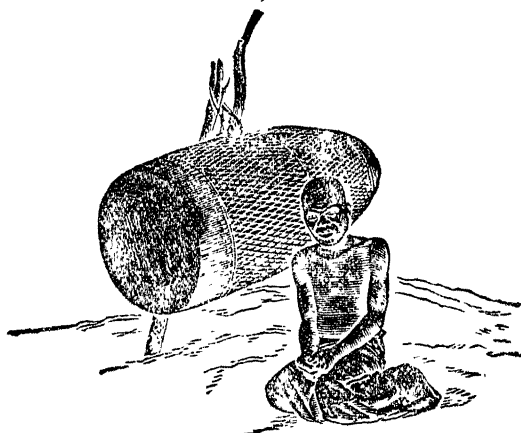
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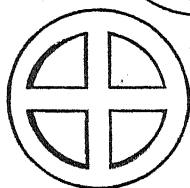
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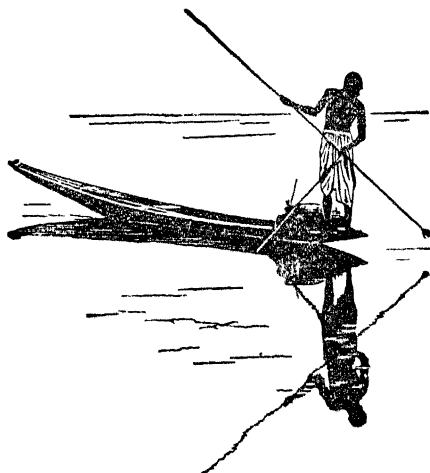
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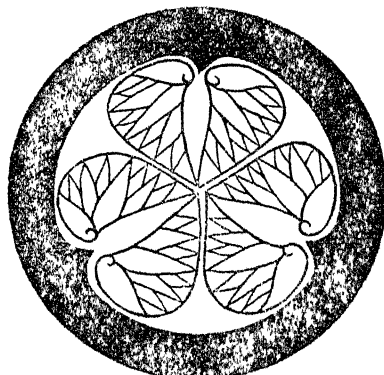
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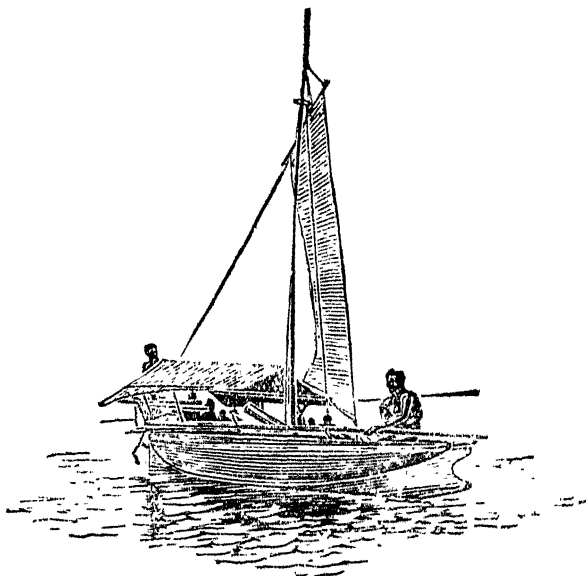
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